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Modeste absorbed in her lover's letter

Honoré De Balzac

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VOLUME FOUR



EUGÉNIE GRANDET

MODESTE MIGNON

NEW YORK

THE REVIEW OF REVIEWS CO.

CONTENTS

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EUGÉNIE GRANDET

PREFACE

WITH *Eugénie Grandet*, as with one or two, but only one or two others of Balzac's works, we come to a case of *Quis vituperavit?* Here, and perhaps here only, with *Le Médecin de Campagne* and *Le Père Goriot*, though there may be carpers and depreciators, there are no open deniers of the merit of the work. The pathos of *Eugénie*, the mastery of *Grandet*, the success of the minor characters, especially *Nanon*, are universally recognized. The importance of the work has sometimes been slightly questioned even by those who admit its beauty: but this questioning can only support itself on the unavowed but frequently present conviction or suspicion that a "good" or "goody" book must be a weak one. As a matter of fact, no book can be, or can be asked to be, better than perfect on its own scheme, and with its own conditions. And on its own scheme and with its own conditions *Eugénie Grandet* is very nearly perfect.

On the character of the heroine will turn the final decision whether, as has been said by some (I believe I might be charged with having said it myself), Balzac's virtuous characters are always more theatrical than real. The decision must take in the *Benassis* of *Le Médecin de Campagne*, but with him it will have less difficulty; for *Benassis*, despite the beauty and pathos of his confession, is a little "a person of the boards" in his unfailing providential character and his complete devotion to others. Must *Eugénie*, his feminine companion in goodness, be put on these boards likewise?

I admit that of late years, and more particularly since the undertaking of this present task made necessary to me a more complete and methodical study of the whole works, including the most miscellaneous miscellanies, than I had previously given, my estimate of Balzac's goodness has gone up very much—that of his greatness had no need of raising. But I still think that even about *Eugénie* there is a very little unreality, a slight touch of that ignorance of the actual

nature of girls which even fervent admirers of French novelists in general, and of Balzac in particular, have confessed to finding in them and him. That Eugénie should be entirely subjugated first by the splendor, and then by the misfortune, of her Parisian cousin, is not in the least unnatural; nor do I for one moment pretend to deny the possibility or the likelihood of her having

“lifted up her eyes,
And loved him with that love which was her doom.”

It is also difficult to make too much allowance for the fatal effect of an education under an insignificant if amiable mother and a tyrannical father, and of a confinement to an excessively small circle of extremely provincial society, on a disposition of more nobility than intellectual height or range. Still it must, I think, be permitted to the *advocatus diaboli* to urge that Eugénie's martyrdom is almost too thorough; that though complete, it is not, as Gautier said of his own ill luck, “*artistement complet*”; that though it may be difficult to put the finger on any special blot, to say, “Here the girl should have revolted,” or, “Here she would have behaved in some other way differently”; still there is a vague sense of incomplete lifelikeness—of that tendency to mirage and exaggeration which has been, and will be, so often noticed.

Still it is vague and not unpleasantly obtrusive, and in all other ways Eugénie is a triumph. It is noticeable that her creator has dwelt on the actual traits of her face with much more distinctness than is usual with him; for Balzac's extraordinary minuteness in many ways does not invariably extend to physical charms. This minuteness is indeed so great that one has a certain suspicion of the head being taken from a live and special original. Nor is her physical presence—abominably libeled, there is no doubt, by Mme. des Grassins—the only distinct thing about Eugénie. We see her hovering about the *beau cousin* with an innocent officiousness capable of committing no less the major crime of lending him money than the minor, but even more audacious because open, one of letting him have sugar. She is perfectly

natural in the courage with which she bears her father's unjust rage, and in the forgiveness which, quite as a matter of course, she extends to him after he has broken her own peace and her mother's heart. It is perhaps necessary to be French to comprehend entirely why she could not heap that magnificent pile of coals of fire on her unworthy cousin's head without flinging herself and her seventeen millions into the arms of somebody else; but the thing can be accepted if not quite understood. And the whole transaction of this heaping is admirable.

If the criticism be not thought something of a super-subtlety, it may perhaps be suggested that the inferiority which has generally been acknowledged in the lover is a confession or indication that there is something very slightly wrong with the scheme of Eugénie herself—that if she had been absolutely natural, it would not have been necessary to make Charles not merely a thankless brute, but a heedless fool. However great a scoundrel the ex-slave-trader may have been (and as presented to us earlier he does not seem so much scoundrelly as shallow), his respectable occupation must have made him a smart man of business; and as such, before burning his boats by such a letter as he writes, he might surely have found out how the land lay. But this does not matter much.

Nanon is, of course, quite excellent. She is not stupid, as her kind are supposed to be; she is only blindly faithful, as well as thoroughly good-hearted. Nor is the unfortunate Mme. Grandet an idiot, nor are any of the *comparses* mere dummies. But naturally they all, even Eugénie herself to some extent, serve mainly as set-offs to the terrible Grandet. In him Balzac, a Frenchman of Frenchmen, has boldly depicted perhaps the worst and the commonest vice of the French character, the vice which is more common, and certainly worse than either the frivolity or the license with which the nation is usually charged—the pushing, to wit, of thrift to the loathsome excess of an inhuman avarice. But he has justified himself to his country by communicating to his hero an unquestioned grandeur. The mirage works again, but it works with splendid effect. One need not be a sentimentalist

to shudder a little at the *ta ta ta ta* of Grandet, the refrain of a money-grubbing which almost escapes greediness by its diabolical extravagance and success.

The bibliography of *Eugénie Grandet* is not complicated. Balzac tried the first chapter (there were originally seven) in *L'Europe Littéraire* for September 19, 1833; but he did not continue it there, and it appeared complete in the first volume of *Scènes de la Vie de Province* next year. Charpentier republished it in a single volume in 1839. The *Comédie* engulfed it in 1843, the chapter divisions then disappearing.

G. S.

EUGÉNIE GRANDET

To Maria.

Your portrait is the fairest ornament of this book, and here it is fitting that your name should be set, like the branch of box taken from some unknown garden to lie for a while in the holy water, and afterwards set by pious hands above the threshold, where the green spray, ever renewed, is a sacred talisman to ward off all evil from the house.

IN some country towns there are houses more depressing to the sight than the dimmest cloister, the most melancholy ruins, or the dreariest stretch of sandy waste. Perhaps such houses combine the characteristics of all the three, and to the dumb silence of the monastery they unite the gauntness and grimness of the ruin, and the arid desolation of the waste. So little sign is there of life or of movement about them, that a stranger might take them for uninhabited dwellings; but the sound of an unfamiliar footstep brings someone to the window, a passive face suddenly appears above the sill, and the traveler receives a listless and indifferent glance—it is almost as if a monk leaned out to look for a moment on the world.

There is one particular house front in Saumur which possesses all these melancholy characteristics; the house is still standing at the end of the steep street which leads to the castle, at the upper end of the town. The street is very quiet nowadays; it is hot in summer and cold in winter, and very dark in places; besides this, it is remarkably narrow and crooked, there is a peculiarly formal and sedate air about its houses, and it is curious how every sound reverberates through it—the cobblestones (always clean and dry) ring with every passing footfall.

This is the oldest part of the town, the ramparts rise immediately above it. The houses of the quarter have stood

for three centuries; and albeit they are built of wood, they are strong and sound yet. Each house has a certain character of its own, so that for the artist and antiquary this is the most attractive part of the town of Saumur. Indeed, it would hardly be possible to go past the house without a wondering glance at the grotesque figures carved on the projecting ends of the huge beams, set like a black bas-relief above the ground floor of almost every dwelling. Sometimes, where these beams have been protected from the weather by slates, a strip of dull blue runs across the crumbling walls, and crowning the whole is a high-pitched roof oddly curved and bent with age; the shingle boards that cover it are all warped and twisted by the alternate sun and rain of many a year. There are bits of delicate carving too, here and there, though you can scarcely make them out, on the worn and blackened window sills that seemed scarcely strong enough to bear the weight of the red flower-pot in which some poor workwoman has set her tree carnation or her monthly rose.

Still further along the street there are more pretentious house-doors studded with huge nails. On these our forefathers exercised their ingenuity, tracing hieroglyphs and mysterious signs which were once understood in every household, but all clues to their meaning are forgotten now—they will be understood no more of any mortal. In such wise would a Protestant make his profession of faith, there also would a Leaguer curse Henry IV. in graven symbols. A burgher would commemorate his civic dignities, the glory of his long-forgotten tenure of office as alderman or sheriff. On these old houses, if we could but read it, the history of France is chronicled.

Beside the rickety little tenement built of wood, with masonry of the roughest, upon the wall of which the craftsman has set the glorified image of his trade—his plane—stands the mansion of some noble, with its massive round arched gateway; you can still see some traces above it of the arms borne by the owner, though they have been torn down in one of the many revolutions which have convulsed the country since 1789.

You will find no imposing shop windows in the street; strictly speaking, indeed, there are no shops at all, for the rooms on the ground floor in which articles are exposed for sale are neither more nor less than the workshops of the times of our forefathers; lovers of the Middle Ages will find here the primitive simplicity of an older world. The low-ceiled rooms are dark, cavernous, and guiltless alike of plate-glass windows or of showcases; there is no attempt at decoration either within or without, no effort is made to display the wares. The door, as a rule, is heavily barred with iron and divided into two parts; the upper half is thrown back during the day, admitting fresh air and daylight into the damp little cave; while the lower portion, to which a bell is attached, is seldom still. The shop front consists of a low wall of about elbow height, which fills half the space between floor and ceiling; there is no window-sash, but heavy shutters fastened with iron bolts fit into a groove in the top of the wall, and are set up at night and taken down in the morning. The same wall serves as a counter on which to set out goods for the customer's inspection. There is no sort of charlatanism about the proceeding. The samples submitted to the public vary according to the nature of the trade. You behold a keg or two of salt or of salted fish, two or three bales of sail-cloth or coils of rope, some copper wire hanging from the rafters, a few cooper's hoops on the walls, or a length or two of cloth upon the shelves.

You go in. A neat and tidy damsel with a pair of bare red arms, the fresh good looks of youth, and a white handkerchief pinned about her throat, lays down her knitting and goes to summon a father or mother, who appears and sells goods to you as you desire, be it a matter of two sous or of twenty thousand francs; the manner of the transaction varying as the humor of the vendor is surly, obliging, or independent. You will see a dealer in barrel-staves sitting in his doorway, twirling his thumbs as he chats with a neighbor; judging from appearances, he might possess nothing in this world but the bottles on his few rickety shelves and two or three bundles of laths; but his

well-stocked timber-yard on the quay supplies all the coopers in Anjou, he knows to a barrel-stave how many casks he can "turn out," as he says, if the vines do well and the vintage is good; a few scorching days and his fortune is made, a rainy summer is a ruinous thing for him; in a single morning the price of puncheons will rise as high as eleven francs or drop to six.

Here, as in Touraine, the whole trade of the district depends upon an atmospherical depression. Landowners, vine-growers, timber merchants, coopers, innkeepers and lightermen, one and all are on the watch for a ray of sunlight. Not a man of them but goes to bed in fear and trembling lest he should hear in the morning that there has been a frost in the night. If it is not rain that they dread, it is wind or drought; they must have cloudy weather or heat, and the rainfall and the weather generally all arranged to suit their peculiar notions.

Between the clerk of the weather and the vine-growing interest there is a duel which never ceases. Faces visibly lengthen or shorten, grow bright or gloomy, with the ups and downs of the barometer. Sometimes you hear from one end to the other of the old High Street of Saumur the words, "This is golden weather!" or again, in language which likewise is no mere figure of speech, "It is raining gold louis!" and they all know the exact value of sun or rain at the right moment.

After twelve o'clock or so on a Saturday in the summer-time, you will not do a pennyworth of business among the worthy townsmen of Saumur. Each has his little farm and his bit of vineyard, and goes to spend the "week-end" in the country. As everybody knows this beforehand, just as everybody knows everybody else's business, his goings and comings, his buyings and sellings, and profits to boot, the good folk are free to spend ten hours out of the twelve in making up pleasant little parties, in taking notes and making comments, and keeping a sharp lookout on their neighbors' affairs. The mistress of a house cannot buy a part-ridge but the neighbors will inquire of her husband whether the bird was done to a turn; no damsel can put her head

out of the window without being observed by every group of unoccupied observers.

Impenetrable, dark, and silent as the houses may seem, they contain no mysteries hidden from public scrutiny, and in the same way everyone knows what is passing in everyone else's mind. To begin with, the good folk spend most of their lives out of doors; they sit on the steps of their houses, breakfast there and dine there, and adjust any little family differences in the doorway. Every passer-by is scanned with the most minute and diligent attention; hence, any stranger who may happen to arrive in such a country town has, in a manner, to run the gauntlet, and is severely quizzed from every doorstep. By dint of perseverance in the methods thus indicated a quantity of droll stories may be collected; and, indeed, the people of Angers, who are of an ingenious turn, and quick at repartee, have been nicknamed "the tattlers" on these very grounds.

The largest houses of the old quarter in which the nobles once dwelt are all at the upper end of the street, and in one of these the events took place which are about to be narrated in the course of this story. As has been already said, it was a melancholy house, a venerable relic of a bygone age, built for the men and women of an older and simpler world, from which our modern France is farther and farther removed day by day. After you have followed for some distance the windings of the picturesque street, where memories of the past are called up by every detail at every turn, till at length you fall unconsciously to musing, you come upon a sufficiently gloomy recess in which a doorway is dimly visible, the door of *M. Grandet's house*. Of all the pride and glory of proprietorship conveyed to the provincial mind by those three words, it is impossible to give any idea, except by giving the biography of the owner—M. Grandet.

M. Grandet enjoyed a certain reputation in Saumur. Its causes and effects can scarcely be properly estimated by outsiders who have not lived in a country town for a longer or shorter time. There were still old people in existence who could remember former times, and called M. Grandet "Good-

man Grandet," but there were not many of them left, and they were rapidly disappearing year by year.

In 1789 Grandet was a master cooper, in a very good way of business, who could read and write and cast accounts. When the French Republic, having confiscated the lands of the Church in the district of Saumur, proceeded to sell them by auction, the cooper was forty years of age, and had just married the daughter of a wealthy timber merchant. As Grandet possessed at that moment his wife's dowry as well as some considerable amount of ready money of his own, he repaired to the bureau of the district; and making due allowance for two hundred double louis offered by his father-in-law to that man of stern morals, the Republican who conducted the sale, the cooper acquired some of the best vineland in the neighborhood, an old abbey, and a few little farms, for an old song, to all of which property, though it might be ill-gotten, the law gave him a clear title.

There was little sympathy felt with the Revolution in Saumur. Goodman Grandet was looked upon as a bold spirit, a Republican, a patriot, an "advanced thinker," and whatnot; but all the "thinking" the cooper ever did turned simply and solely on the subject of his vines. He was nominated as a member of the administration of the district of Saumur, and exercised a pacific influence both in politics and in commerce. Politically, he befriended the *ci-devants*, and did all that he could to prevent the sale of their property; commercially, he contracted to supply two thousand hogsheads of white wine to the Republican armies, taking his payment for the aforesaid hogsheads in the shape of certain acres of meadowland belonging to a convent, the property of the nuns having been reserved till the last.

In the days of the Consulate, Master Grandet became mayor; acted prudently in his public capacity, and did very well for himself. Times changed, the Empire was established, and he became *Monsieur* Grandet. But M. Grandet had been looked upon as a red Republican, and Napoleon had no liking for Republicans, so the mayor was replaced by a large landowner, a man with a *de* before his name, and a prospect of one day becoming a baron of the Empire.

M. Grandet turned his back upon municipal honors without a shadow of regret. He had looked well after the interests of the town during his term of office, excellent roads had been made, passing in every case by his own domains. His house and land had been assessed very moderately, the burden of the taxes did not fall too grievously upon him; since the assessment, moreover, he had given ceaseless attention and care to the cultivation of his vines, so that they had become the *tête du pays*,¹ the technical term for those vineyards which produce wine of the finest quality. He had a fair claim to the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and he received it in 1806.

By this time M. Grandet was fifty-seven years old, and his wife about thirty-six. The one child of the marriage was a daughter, a little girl ten years of age. Providence doubtless sought to console M. Grandet for his official downfall, for in this year he succeeded to three fortunes; the total value was matter of conjecture, no certain information being forthcoming. The first fell in on the death of Mme. de la Gaudinière, Mme. Grandet's mother; the deceased lady had been a de la Bertellière, and her father, old M. de la Bertellière, soon followed her; the third in order was Mme. Gentillet, M. Grandet's grandmother on the mother's side. Old M. de la Bertellière used to call an investment "throwing money away"; the sight of his hoards of gold repaid him better than any rate of interest upon it. The town of Saumur, therefore, roughly calculated the value of the amount that the late de la Bertellière was likely to have saved out of his yearly takings; and M. Grandet received a new distinction which none of our manias for equality can efface—he paid more taxes than anyone else in the country round.

He now cultivated a hundred acres of vineyard; in a good year they would yield seven or eight hundred puncheons. He had thirteen little farms, an old abbey (motives of economy had led him to wall up the windows, and so preserve the traceries and stained glass), and a hundred and twenty-seven acres of grazing-land, in which three thousand

¹ Lit.: Head of the country.

poplars, planted in 1793, were growing taller and larger every year. Finally, he owned the house in which he lived.

In these visible ways his prosperity had increased. As to his capital, there were only two people in a position to make a guess at its probable amount. One of these was the notary, M. Cruchot, who transacted all the necessary business whenever M. Grandet made an investment; and the other was M. des Grassins, the wealthiest banker in the town, who did Grandet many good offices which were unknown to Saumur. Secrets of this nature, involving extensive business transactions, are usually well kept; but the discreet caution of MM. Cruchot and des Grassins did not prevent them from addressing M. Grandet in public with such profound deference that close observers might draw their own conclusions. Clearly the wealth of their late mayor must be prodigious indeed that he should receive such obsequious attention.

There was no one in Saumur who did not fully believe the report which told how, in a secret hiding-place, M. Grandet had a hoard of louis, and how every night he went to look at it, and gave himself up to the inexpressible delight of gazing at the huge heap of gold. He was not the only money-lover in Saumur. Sympathetic observers looked at his eyes and felt that the story was true, for they seemed to have the yellow metallic glitter of the coin over which it was said they had brooded. Nor was this the only sign. Certain small indefinable habits, furtive movements, slight mysterious promptings of greed did not escape the keen observation of fellow-worshippers. There is something vulpine about the eyes of a man who lends money at an exorbitant rate of interest; they gradually and surely contract like those of the gambler, the sensualist, or the courtier; and there is, so to speak, a sort of freemasonry among the passions, a written language of hieroglyphs and signs for those who can read them.

M. Grandet therefore inspired in all around him the respectful esteem which is but the due of a man who has never owed anyone a farthing in his life; a just and legiti-

mate tribute to an astute old cooper and vine-grower who knew beforehand with the certainty of an astronomer when five hundred casks would serve for the vintage, and when to have a thousand in readiness; a man who had never lost on any speculation, who had always a stock of empty barrels whenever casks were so dear that they fetched more than the contents were worth; who could store his vintage in his own cellars, and afford to bide his time, so that his puncheons would bring him in a couple of hundred francs, while many a little proprietor who could not wait had to be content with half that amount. His famous vintage in the year 1811, discreetly held, and sold only as good opportunities offered, had been worth two hundred and forty thousand livres to him.

In matters financial M. Grandet might be described as combining the characteristics of the Bengal tiger and the boa constrictor. He could lie low and wait, crouching, watching for his prey, and make his spring unerringly at last; then the jaws of his purse would unclose, a torrent of coin would be swallowed down, and, as in the case of the gorged reptile, there would be a period of inaction; like the serpent, moreover, he was cold, apathetic, methodical, keeping to his own mysterious times and seasons.

No one could see the man pass without feeling a certain kind of admiration, which was half-dread, half-respect. The tiger's clutch was like steel, his claws were sharp and swift; was there anyone in Saumur who had not felt them? Such an one, for instance, wanted to borrow money to buy that piece of land which he had set his heart upon; M. Cruchot had found the money for him—at eleven per cent. And there was So-and-so yonder; M. des Grassins had discounted his bills, but it was at a ruinous rate.

There were not many days when M. Grandet's name did not come up in conversation, in familiar talk in the evenings, or in the gossip of the town. There were people who took a kind of patriotic pride in the old vine-grower's wealth. More than one innkeeper or merchant had found occasion to remark to a stranger with a certain complacency, "There are millionaires in two or three of our firms here, sir; but

as for M. Grandet, he himself could hardly tell you how much he was worth!"

In 1816 the shrewdest heads in Saumur set down the value of the cooper's landed property at about four millions; but as, to strike a fair average, he must have drawn something like a hundred thousand francs (they thought) from his property between the years 1793 and 1817, the amount of money he possessed must nearly equal the value of the land. So when M. Grandet's name was mentioned over a game at boston, or a chat about the prospects of the vines, these folk would look wise and remark, "Who is that you are talking of? Old Grandet? Old Grandet must have five or six millions, there is no doubt about it."

"Then you are cleverer than I am; I have never been able to find out how much he has," M. Cruchot or M. des Grassins would put in, if they overheard the speech.

If anyone from Paris mentioned the Rothschilds or M. Laffitte, the good people in Saumur would ask if any of those persons were as rich as M. Grandet? And if the Parisian should answer in the affirmative with a pitying smile, they looked at one another incredulously and flung up their heads. So great a fortune was like a golden mantle; it covered its owner and all that he did. At one time some of the eccentricities of his mode of life gave rise to laughter at his expense; but the satire and the laughter had died out, and M. Grandet still went his way, till at last even his slightest actions came to be taken as precedents, and every trifling thing he said or did carried weight. His remarks, his clothing, his gestures, the way he blinked his eyes, had all been studied with the care with which a naturalist studies the workings of instinct in some wild creature; and no one failed to discern the taciturn and profound wisdom that underlay all these manifestations.

"We shall have a hard winter," they would say; "old Grandet has put on his fur gloves, we must gather the grapes." Or, "Goodman Grandet is laying in a lot of cask staves; there will be plenty of wine this year."

M. Grandet never bought either meat or bread. Part of his rents were paid in kind, and every week his tenants brought

in poultry, eggs, butter, and wheat sufficient for the needs of his household. Moreover, he owned a mill, and the miller, besides paying rent, came over to fetch a certain quantity of corn, and brought him back both the bran and the flour. Big Nanon, the one maid-servant, baked all the bread once a week on Saturday mornings (though she was not so young as she had been). Others of the tenants were market gardeners, and M. Grandet had arranged that these were to keep him supplied with fresh vegetables. Of fruit there was no lack; indeed, he sold a good deal of it in the market. Firewood was gathered from his own hedges, or taken from old stumps of trees that grew by the sides of his fields. His tenants chopped up the wood, carted it into the town, and obligingly stacked his fagots for him, receiving in return—his thanks. So he seldom had occasion to spend money. His only known items of expenditure were for sacramental bread, for sittings in the church for his wife and daughter, their dress, Nanon's wages, renewals of the linings of Nanon's saucepans, repairs about the house, candles, rates and taxes, and the necessary outlays of money for improvements. He had recently acquired six hundred acres of woodland, and, being unable to look after it himself, had induced a keeper belonging to a neighbor to attend to it, promising to repay the man for his trouble. After this purchase had been made, and not before, game appeared on the Grandets' table.

Grandet's manners were distinctly homely. He did not say very much. He expressed his ideas, as a rule, in brief, sententious phrases, uttered in a low voice. Since the time of the Revolution, when for a while he had attracted some attention, the worthy man had contracted a tiresome habit of stammering as soon as he took part in a discussion or began to speak at any length. He had other peculiarities. He habitually drowned his ideas in a flood of words more or less incoherent; his singular inaptitude for reasoning logically was usually set down to a defective education; but this, like his unwelcome fluency, the trick of stammering, and various other mannerisms, was assumed, and for reasons which, in the course of the story, will be made sufficiently

clear. In conversation, moreover, he had other resources: four phrases, like algebraical formulæ, which fitted every case, were always forthcoming to solve every knotty problem in business or domestic life—"I do not know," "I cannot do it," "I will have nothing to do with it," and "We shall see." He never committed himself; he never said yes or no; he never put anything down in writing. He listened with apparent indifference when he was spoken to, caressing his chin with his right hand, while the back of his left supported his elbow. When once he had formed his opinion in any matter of business, he never changed it; but he pondered long even over the smallest transactions. When in the course of deep and weighty converse he had managed to fathom the intentions of an antagonist, who meanwhile flattered himself that *he* at last knew where to have Grandet, the latter was wont to say, "I must talk it over with my wife before I can give a definite answer." In business matters the wife, whom he had reduced to the most abject submission, was unquestionably a most convenient support and screen.

He never paid visits, never dined away from home, nor asked anyone to dinner; his movements were almost noiseless; he seemed to carry out his principles of economy in everything; to make no useless sound, to be chary of spending even physical energy. His respect for the rights of ownership was so habitual that he never displaced nor disturbed anything belonging to another. And yet, in spite of the low tones of his voice, in spite of his discretion and cautious bearing, the cooper's real character showed itself in his language and manners, and this was more especially the case in his own house, where he was less on his guard than elsewhere.

As to Grandet's exterior. He was a broad, square-shouldered, thick-set man, about five feet high; his legs were thin (he measured perhaps twelve inches round the calves), his knee-joints large and prominent. He had a bullet-shaped head, a sun-burned face, scarred with the smallpox, and a narrow chin; there was no trace of a curve about the lines of his mouth. He possessed a set of white teeth, eyes with

the expression of stony avidity in them with which the basilisk is credited, a deeply furrowed brow on which there were prominences not lacking in significance, hair that had once been of a sandy hue, but which was now fast turning gray; so that thoughtless youngsters, rash enough to make jokes on so serious a subject, would say that M. Grandet's very hair was "gold and silver." On his nose, which was broad and blunt at the tip, was a variegated wen; gossip affirmed, not without some appearance of truth, that spite and rancor were the cause of this affection. There was a dangerous cunning about this face, although the man, indeed, was honest according to the letter of the law; it was a selfish face; there were but two things in the world for which its owner cared—the delights of hoarding wealth, in the first place, and, in the second, the only being who counted for anything in his estimation, his daughter Eugénie, his only child, who one day should inherit that wealth. His attitude, manner, bearing, and everything about him plainly showed that he had the belief in himself which is the natural outcome of an unbroken record of successful business speculations. Pliant and smooth-spoken though he might appear to be, M. Grandet was a man of bronze. He was always dressed after the same fashion; in 1819 he looked in this respect exactly as he had looked at any time since 1791. His heavy shoes were secured by leather laces; he wore thick woolen stockings all the year round, knee breeches of chestnut brown homespun, silver buckles, a brown velvet waistcoat adorned with yellow stripes and buttoned up to the throat, a loosely fitting coat with ample skirts, a black cravat, and a broad-brimmed Quaker-like hat. His gloves, like those of the gendarmerie, were chosen with a view to hard wear; a pair lasted him nearly two years. In order to keep them clean, he always laid them down on the same place on the brim of his hat, till the action had come to be mechanical with him. So much, and no more, Saumur knew of this her citizen.

A few fellow-townpeople, six in all, had the right of entry to Grandet's house and society. First among these in order of importance was M. Cruchot's nephew. Ever since his

appointment as president of the court of first instance, this young man had added the appellation "de Bonfons" to his original name of Cruchot; in time he hoped that the Bonfons would efface the Cruchot, when he meant to drop the Cruchot altogether, and was at no little pains to compass this end. Already he styled himself C. de Bonfons. Any litigant who was so ill inspired as to address him in court as "M. Cruchot" was soon made painfully aware that he had blundered. The magistrate was about thirty-three years of age, and the owner of the estate of Bonfons (*Boni Fontis*), which brought in annually seven thousand livres. In addition to this he had prospects; he would succeed some day to the property of his uncle the notary, and there was yet another uncle besides, the Abbé Cruchot, a dignitary of the chapter of Saint Martin of Tours; both relatives were commonly reported to be men of substance. The three Cruchots, with a goodly number of kinsfolk, connected too by marriage with a score of other houses, formed a sort of party in the town, like the family of the Medicis in Florence long ago; and, like the Medicis, the Cruchots had their rivals—their Pazzi.

Mme. des Grassins, the mother of a son twenty-three years of age, came assiduously to take a hand at cards with Mme. Grandet, hoping to marry her own dear Adolphe to Mlle. Eugénie. She had a powerful ally in her husband the banker, who had secretly rendered the old miser many a service, and who could give opportune aid on her field of battle. The three des Grassins had likewise their host of adherents, their cousins and trusty auxiliaries.

The Abbé (the Talleyrand of the Cruchot faction), well supported by his brother the notary, closely disputed the ground with the banker's wife; they meant to carry off the wealthy heiress for their nephew the president. The struggle between the two parties for the prize of the hand of Eugénie Grandet was an open secret; all Saumur watched it with the keenest interest. Which would Mlle. Grandet marry? Would it be M. le Président or M. Adolphe des Grassins? Some solved the problem by saying that M. Grandet would give his daughter to neither. The old cooper

(said they) was consumed with an ambition to have a peer of France for his son-in-law, and he was on the lookout for a peer of France, who for the consideration of an income of three hundred thousand livres would find all the past, present, and future barrels of the Grandets no obstacle to a match. Others demurred to this, and urged that both M. and Mme. des Grassins came of a good family, that they had wealth enough for anything, that Adolphe was a very good-looking, pretty behaved young man, and that unless the Grandets had a Pope's nephew somewhere in the background, they ought to be satisfied with a match in every way so suitable; for they were nobodies after all; all Saumur had seen Grandet going about with an adze in his hands, and, moreover, he had worn the red cap of Liberty in his time.

The more astute observers remarked that M. Cruchot de Bonfons was free of the house in the High Street, while his rival only visited there on Sundays. Some maintained that Mme. des Grassins, being on more intimate terms with the women of the house, had opportunities of inculcating certain ideas which sooner or later must conduce to her success. Others retorted that the Abbé Cruchot had the most insinuating manner in the world, and that with a churchman on one side and a woman on the other the chances were about even.

"It is gown against cassock," said a local wit.

Those whose memories went farther back said that the Grandets were too prudent to let all that property go out of the family. Mlle. Eugénie Grandet of Saumur would be married one of these days to the son of the other M. Grandet of Paris, a rich wholesale wine merchant. To these both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were wont to reply as follows—

"In the first place, the brothers have not met twice in thirty years. Then M. Grandet of Paris is ambitious for that son of his. He himself is mayor of his division of the department, a deputy, a colonel of the National Guard, and a judge of the tribunal of commerce. He does not own to any relationship with the Grandets of Saumur, and is seeking to connect himself with one of Napoleon's dukes."

What will not people say of an heiress? Eugénie Grandet was a stock subject of conversation for twenty leagues round; nay, in public conveyances, even as far as Angers on the one hand and Blois on the other!

In the beginning of the year 1811 the Cruchotins gained a signal victory over the Grassinistes. The young Marquis de Froidfond being compelled to realize his capital, the estate of Froidfond, celebrated for its park and its handsome château, was for sale; together with its dependent farms, rivers, fish-ponds, and forest; altogether it was worth three million francs. M. Cruchot, President Cruchot, and the Abbé Cruchot by uniting their forces had managed to prevent a proposed division into small lots. The notary made an uncommonly good bargain for his client, representing to the young Marquis that the purchase money of the small lots could only be collected after endless trouble and expense, and that he would have to sue a large proportion of the purchasers for it; while here was M. Grandet, a man whose credit stood high, and who was moreover ready to pay for the land at once in hard coin, it would be better to take M. Grandet's offer. In this way the fair marquise of Froidfond was swallowed down by M. Grandet, who, to the amazement of Saumur, paid for it in ready money (deducting discount, of course) as soon as the required formalities were completed. The news of this transaction traveled far and wide; it reached Orleans, it was spoken of at Nantes.

M. Grandet went to see his château, and on this wise: a cart happened to be returning thither, so he embraced this opportunity of visiting his newly-acquired property, and took a look around in the capacity of owner. Then he returned to Saumur, well convinced that this investment would bring him in a clear five per cent., and fired with a magnificent ambition; he would add his own bits of land to the marquise of Froidfond, and everything should lie within a ring fence. For the present he would set himself to replenish his almost exhausted coffers; he would cut down every stick of timber in his copses and forests, and fell the poplars in his meadows.

It is easy after this explanation to understand all that

was conveyed by the words, "M. Grandet's house"—the cold, dreary, and silent house at the upper end of the town, under the shadow of the ruined ramparts.

Two pillars supported the arch above the doorway, and for these, as also for the building of the house itself, a porous crumbling stone peculiar to the district along the banks of the Loire had been employed, a kind of tufa so soft that at most it scarcely lasts for two hundred years. Rain and frost had gnawed numerous irregular holes in the surface, with a curious effect; the piers and the voussoirs looked as though they were composed of the vermicular stones often met with in French architecture. The doorway might have been the portal of a jail. Above the arch there was a long sculptured bas-relief of harder stone, representing the four seasons, four forlorn figures, aged, blackened, and weather-worn. Above the bas-relief there was a projecting ledge of masonry where some chance-sown plants had taken root; yellow pellitory, bind-weed, a plantain or two, and a little cherry tree, that even now had reached a fair height.

The massive door itself was of dark oak, shrunk and warped, and full of cracks; but, feeble as it looked, it was firmly held together by a series of iron nails with huge heads, driven into the wood in a symmetrical design. In the middle there was a small square grating covered with rusty iron bars, which served as an excuse for a door knocker which hung there from a ring, and struck upon the menacing head a great iron bolt. The knocker itself, oblong in shape, was of the kind that our ancestors used to call a "Jaquemart," and not unlike a huge note of admiration. If an antiquary had examined it carefully, he might have found some traces of the grotesque human head that it once represented, but the features of the typical clown had long since been effaced by constant wear. The little grating had been made in past times of civil war, so that the household might recognize their friends without before admitting them, but now it afforded to inquisitive eyes a view of a dank and gloomy archway, and a flight of broken steps leading to a not unpicturesque garden shut in by thick walls through which the damp was oozing, and

a hedge of sickly looking shrubs. The walls were part of the old fortifications, and up above on the ramparts there were yet other gardens belonging to some of the neighboring houses.

A door beneath the arch of the gateway opened into a large parlor, the principal room on the ground floor. Few people comprehend the importance of this apartment in little towns in Anjou, Berri, and Touraine. The parlor is also the hall, drawing-room, study, and boudoir all in one; it is the stage on which the drama of domestic life is played, the very heart and center of the home. Hither the hairdresser repaired once in six months to cut M. Grandet's hair. The tenants and the curé, the sous-préfet, and the miller's lad were all alike shown into this room. There were two windows which looked out upon the street, the floor was boarded, the walls were paneled from floor to ceiling, covered with old carvings, and painted gray. The rafters were left visible, and were likewise painted gray, the plaster in intervening spaces was yellow with age.

An old brass clock-case inlaid with arabesques in tortoise-shell stood on the chimney-piece, which was of white stone, and adorned with rude carvings. Above it stood a mirror of a greenish hue, the edges were beveled in order to display the thickness of the glass, and reflected a thin streak of colored light into the room, which was caught again by the polished surface of another mirror of Damascus steel, which hung upon the wall.

Two branched sconces of gilded copper which adorned either end of the chimney-piece answered a double purpose. The branch roses which served as candle-sockets were removable, and the main stem, fitted into an antique copper contrivance on a bluish marble pedestal, did duty as a candlestick for ordinary days.

The old-fashioned chairs were covered with tapestry, on which the fables of La Fontaine were depicted; but a thorough knowledge of the author was required to make out the subjects, for the colors had faded badly, and the outlines of the figures were hardly visible through a multitude of darns. Four sideboards occupied the four corners of the

room, each of these articles of furniture terminating in a tier of very dirty shelves. An old inlaid card-table with a chess-board marked out upon its surface stood in the space between the two windows, and on the wall, above the table, hung an oval barometer in a dark wooden setting, adorned by a carved bunch of ribbons; they had been gilt ribbons once upon a time, but generations of flies had wantonly obscured the gilding, till its existence had become problematical. Two portraits in pastel hung on the wall opposite the fireplace. One was believed to represent Mme. Grandet's grandfather, old M. de la Bertellière, as a lieutenant in the Guards, and the other the late Mme. Gentillet, as a shepherdess.

Crimson curtains of *gros de Tours* were hung in the windows and fastened back with silk cords and huge tassels. This luxurious upholstery, so little in harmony with the manners and customs of the Grandets, had been included in the purchase of the house, like the pier-glass, the brass timepiece, the tapestry-covered chairs, and the rosewood corner sideboards. In the further window stood a straw-bottom chair, raised on blocks of wood, so that Mme. Grandet could watch the passers-by as she sat. A work-table of cherry-wood, bleached and faded by the light, filled the other window space, and close beside it Eugénie Grandet's little armchair was set.

The lives of mother and daughter had flowed on tranquilly for fifteen years. Day after day, from April to November, they sat at work in the windows; but the first day of the latter month found them beside the fire, where they took up their positions for the winter. Grandet would not allow a fire to be lighted in the room before that date, nor again after the 31st of March, let the early days of spring or of autumn be cold as they might. Big Nanon managed by stealth to fill a little brasier with glowing ashes from the kitchen fire, and in this way the chilly evenings of April and October were rendered tolerable for Mme. and Mlle. Grandet. All the household linen was kept in repair by the mother and daughter; and so conscientiously did they devote their days to this duty (no light task in truth),

that if Eugénie wanted to embroider a collarette for her mother she was obliged to steal the time from her hours of slumber, and to resort to a deception to obtain from her father the candle by which she worked. For a long while past it had been the miser's wont to dole out the candles to his daughter and big Nanon in the same way that he gave out the bread and the other matters daily required by the household.

Perhaps big Nanon was the one servant in existence who could and would have endured her master's tyrannous rule. Everyone in the town used to envy M. and Mme. Grandet. "Big Nanon," so called on account of her height of five feet eight inches, had been a part of the Grandet household for thirty-five years. She was held to be one of the richest servants in Saumur, and this on a yearly wage of seventy livres! The seventy livres had accumulated for thirty-five years, and quite recently Nanon had deposited four thousand livres with M. Cruchot for the purchase of an annuity. This result of a long and persevering course of thrift appealed to the imagination—it seemed tremendous. There was not a maid-servant in Saumur but was envious of the poor woman, who by the time she had reached her sixtieth year would have scraped together enough to keep herself from want in her old age; but no one thought of the hard life and all the toil which had gone to the making of that little hoard.

Thirty-five years ago, when Nanon had been a homely, hard-featured girl of two-and-twenty, she had not been able to find a place because her appearance had been so much against her. Poor Nanon! it was really very hard. If her head had been set on the shoulders of a grenadier it would have been greatly admired, but there is a fitness in things, and Nanon's style of beauty was inappropriate. She had been a herdsman on a farm for a time, till the farmhouse had been burnt down, and then it was that, full of the robust courage that shrinks from nothing, she came to seek service in Saumur.

At that time M. Grandet was thinking of marriage, and already determined to set up housekeeping. The girl, who

had been rebuffed from door to door, came under his notice. He was a cooper, and therefore a good judge of physical strength; he foresaw at once how useful this feminine Hercules could be, a strongly-made woman who stood planted as firmly on her feet as an oak tree rooted in the soil where it has grown for two generations, a woman with square shoulders, large hips, and hands like a plowman's, and whose honesty was as unquestionable as her virtue. He was not dismayed by a martial countenance, a disfiguring wart or two, a complexion like burnt clay, and a pair of sinewy arms; neither did Nanon's rags alarm the cooper, whose heart was not yet hardened against misery. He took the poor girl into his service, gave her food, clothes, shoes, and wages. Nanon found her hard life not intolerably hard. Nay, she secretly shed tears of joy at being so treated; she felt a sincere attachment for this master, who expected as much from her as ever feudal lord required of a serf.

Nanon did all the work of the house. She did the cooking and the washing, carrying all the linen down to the Loire and bringing it back on her shoulders. She rose at daybreak and went to bed late. It was she who, without any assistance, cooked for the vintagers in the autumn, and looked sharply after the market-folk. She watched over her master's property like a faithful dog, and with a blind belief in him; she obeyed his most arbitrary commands without a murmur—his whims were law to her.

After twenty years of service, in the famous year 1811, when the vintage had been gathered in after unheard-of toil and trouble, Grandet made up his mind to present Nanon with his old watch, the only gift she had ever received from him. She certainly had the reversion of his old shoes (which happened to fit her), but as a rule they were so far seen into already that they were of little use to anyone else, and could not be looked upon as a present. Sheer necessity had made the poor girl so penurious that Grandet grew quite fond of her at last, and regarded her with the same sort of affection that a man gives to his dog; and as for Nanon, she cheerfully wore the collar of servitude set round with spikes that she had ceased to feel. Grandet might

stint the day's allowance of bread, but she did not grumble. The fare might be scanty and poor, but Nanon's spirits did not suffer, and her health appeared to benefit; there was never any illness in that house.

And then Nanon was one of the family. She shared every mood of Grandet's, laughed when he laughed, was depressed when he was out of spirits, took her views of the weather or of the temperature from him, and worked with him and for him. This equality was an element of sweetness which made up for many hardships in her lot. Out in the vineyards her master had never said a word about the small peaches, plums, or nectarines eaten under the trees that are planted between the rows of vines.

"Come, Nanon, take as much as you like," he would say, in years when the branches were bending beneath their load, and fruit was so abundant that the farmers round about were forced to give it to the pigs.

For the peasant girl, for the outdoor farm-servant, who had known nothing but harsh treatment from childhood, for the girl who had been rescued from starvation by charity, old Grandet's equivocal laughter was like a ray of sunshine. Besides, Nanon's simple nature and limited intelligence could only entertain one idea at a time; and during those thirty-five years of service one picture was constantly present to her mind—she saw herself a barefooted girl in rags standing at the gate of M. Grandet's timber-yard, and heard the sound of the cooper's voice, saying, "What is it, lassie?" and the warmth of gratitude filled her heart to-day as it did then. Sometimes, as he watched her, the thought came up in Grandet's mind how that no syllable of praise or admiration had ever been breathed in her ears, that all the tender feelings that a woman inspires had no existence for her, and that she might well appear before God one day as chaste as the Virgin Mary herself. And such times, prompted by a sudden impulse of pity, he would exclaim, "Poor Nanon!"

The remark was always followed by an indescribable look from the old servant. The words so spoken from time to time were separate links in a long and unbroken chain of

friendship. But in this pity in the miser's soul, which gave a thrill of pleasure to the lonely woman, there was something indescribably revolting; it was a cold-blooded pity that stirred the cooper's heart; it was a luxury that cost him nothing. But for Nanon it meant the height of happiness! Who will not likewise say, "Poor Nanon!" God will one day know His angels by the tones of their voices and by the sorrow hidden in their hearts.

There were plenty of households in Saumur where servants were better treated, but where their employers, nevertheless, enjoyed small comfort in return. Wherefore people asked, "What have the Grandets done to that big Nanon of theirs that she should be so attached to them? She would go through fire and water to serve them!"

Her kitchen, with its barred windows that looked out into the yard, was always clean, cold and tidy, a thorough miser's kitchen, in which nothing was allowed to be wasted. When Nanon had washed her plates and dishes, put the remains of the dinner into the safe, and raked out the fire, she left her kitchen (which was only separated from the dining-room by the breadth of a passage), and sat down to spin hemp in the company of her employers, for a single candle must suffice for the whole family in the evening. The serving-maid slept in a little dark closet at the end of the passage, lit only by a borrowed light. Nanon had an iron constitution and sound health, which enabled her to sleep with impunity year after year in this hole, where she could hear the slightest sound that broke the heavy silence brooding day and night over the house; she lay like a watch-dog, with one ear open; she was never off duty, not even while she slept.

Some description of the rest of the house will be necessary in the course of the story in connection with later events; but the parlor, wherein all the splendor and luxury of the house was concentrated, has been sketched already, and the emptiness and bareness of the upper rooms can be surmised for the present.

It was in the middle of November, in the year 1819, twilight was coming on, and big Nanon was lighting a fire in

the parlor for the first time. It was a festival day in the calendar of the Cruchotins and Grassinistes, wherefore the six antagonists were preparing to set forth, all armed *cap-à-pie*, for a contest in which each side meant to outdo the other in proofs of friendship. The Grandets' parlor was to be the scene of action. That morning Mme. and Mlle. Grandet, duly attended by Nanon, had repaired to the parish church to hear Mass. All Saumur had seen them go, and everyone had been put in mind of the fact that it was Eugénie's birthday. M. Cruchot, the Abbé Cruchot, and M. C. de Bonfons, therefore, having calculated the hour when dinner would be over, were eager to be first in the field, and to arrive before the Grassinistes to congratulate Mlle. Grandet. All three carried huge bunches of flowers gathered in their little garden plots, but the stalks of the magistrate's bouquet were ingeniously bound round by a white satin ribbon with a tinsel fringe at the ends.

In the morning M. Grandet had gone to Eugénie's room before she had left her bed, and had solemnly presented her with a rare gold coin. It was her father's wont to surprise her in this way twice every year—once on her birthday, once on the equally memorable day of her patron saint. Mme. Grandet usually gave her daughter a winter or a summer dress, according to circumstances. The two dresses and two gold coins, which she received on her father's birthday and on New Year's Day, altogether amounted to an annual income of nearly a hundred crowns; Grandet loved to watch the money accumulating in her hands. He did not part with his money; he felt that it was only like taking it out of one box and putting it into another; and besides, was it not, so to speak, fostering a proper regard for gold in his heiress? She was being trained in the way in which she should go. Now and then he asked for an account of her wealth (formerly swelled by gifts from the la Bertellières), and each time he did so he used to tell her, "This will be your dozen when you are married."

The *dozen* is an old-world custom which has lost none of its force, and is still religiously adhered to in several midland districts in France. In Berri or Anjou, when a

daughter is married, it is incumbent upon her parents, or upon her bridegroom's family, to give her a purse containing either a dozen, or twelve dozen, or twelve hundred gold or silver coins, the amount varying with the means of the family. The poorest herd-girl would not be content without her *dozen* when she married, even if she could only bring twelve pence as a dower. They talk even yet at Issoudun of a fabulous dozen once given to a rich heiress, which consisted of a hundred and forty-four Portuguese moidores; and when Catherine de' Medici was married to Henry II., her uncle, Clement VII., gave the bride a dozen antique gold medals of priceless value.

Eugénie wore her new dress at dinner, and looked prettier than usual in it; her father was in high good-humor.

"Let us have a fire," he cried, "as it is Eugénie's birthday! It will be a good omen."

"Mademoiselle will be married within the year, that's certain," said big Nanon, as she removed the remains of a goose, that pheasant of the coopers of Saumur.

"There is no one that I know of in Saumur who would do for Eugénie," said Mme. Grandet, with a timid glance at her husband, a glance that revealed how completely her husband's tyranny had broken the poor woman's spirit.

Grandet looked at his daughter, and said merrily, "We must really begin to think about her; the little girl is twenty-three years old to-day."

Neither Eugénie nor her mother said a word, but they exchanged glances; they understood each other.

Mme. Grandet's face was thin and wrinkled and yellow as saffron; she was awkward and slow in her movements, one of those beings who seem born to be tyrannized over. She was a large-boned woman, with a large nose, large eyes, and a prominent forehead; there seemed to be, at first sight, some dim suggestion of a resemblance between her and some shriveled, spongy, dried-up fruit. The few teeth that remained to her were dark and discolored; there were deep lines fretted about her mouth, and her chin was something after the "nut-cracker" pattern. She was a good sort of a woman, and a la Bertelière to the backbone. The Abbé

Cruchot had more than once found occasion to tell her that she had not been so bad looking when she was young, and she did not disagree with him. An angelic sweetness of disposition, the helpless meekness of an insect in the hands of cruel children, a sincere piety, a kindly heart, and an even temper that nothing could ruffle or sour, had gained universal respect and pity for her.

Her appearance might provoke a smile, but she had brought her husband more than three hundred thousand francs, partly as her dowry, partly through bequests. Yet Grandet never gave his wife more than six francs at a time for pocket-money, and she always regarded herself as dependent upon her husband. The meek gentleness of her nature forbade any revolt against his tyranny; but so deeply did she feel the humiliation of her position that she never asked him for a sou, and when M. Cruchot demanded her signature to any document, she always gave it without a word. This foolish, sensitive pride which Grandet constantly and unwittingly hurt, this magnanimity which he was quite incapable of understanding, were Mme. Grandet's dominant characteristics.

Her dress never varied. Her gown was always of the same dull, greenish shade of laventine, and usually lasted her nearly a twelvemonth; the large handkerchief at her throat was of some kind of cotton material; she wore a straw bonnet, and was seldom seen without a black silk apron. She left the house so rarely that her walking shoes were seldom worn out; indeed, her requirements were very few, she never wanted anything for herself. Sometimes it would occur to Grandet that it was a long while since he had given the last six francs to his wife, and his conscience would prick him a little; and after the vintage, when he sold his wine, he always demanded pin-money for his wife over and above the bargain. These four or five louis out of the pockets of the Dutch or Belgian merchants were Mme. Grandet's only certain source of yearly income. But although she received her five louis, her husband would often say to her, as if they had one common purse, "Have you a few sous that you can lend me?" and she, poor woman, glad

that it was in her power to do anything for the man whom her confessor always taught her to regard as her lord and master, used to return to him more than one crown out of her little store in the course of the winter. Every month, when Grandet disbursed the five-franc piece which he allowed his daughter for needles, thread, and small expenses of dress, he remarked to his wife (after he had buttoned up his pocket), "And how about you, mother; do you want anything?" And with a mother's dignity Mme. Grandet would answer, "We will talk about that by-and-by, dear."

Her magnanimity was entirely lost upon Grandet; he considered that he did very handsomely by his wife. The philosophic mind, contemplating the Nanons, the Mme. Grandets, the Eugénies of this life, holds that the Author of the universe is a profound satirist, and who will quarrel with the conclusion of the philosophic mind? After the dinner, when the question of Eugénie's marriage had been raised for the first time, Nanon went up to M. Grandet's room to fetch a bottle of black-currant cordial, and very nearly lost her footing on the staircase as she came down.

"Great stupid! Are *you* going to take to tumbling about?" inquired her master.

"It is all along of the step, sir; it gave way. The staircase isn't safe."

"She is quite right," said Mme. Grandet. "You ought to have had it mended long ago. Eugénie all but sprained her foot on it yesterday."

"Here," said Grandet, who saw that Nanon looked very pale, "as to-day is Eugénie's birthday, and you have nearly fallen downstairs, take a drop of black-currant cordial; that will put you right again."

"I deserve it, too, upon my word," said Nanon. "Many a one would have broken the bottle in my place; I should have broken my elbow first, holding it up to save it."

"Poor Nanon!" muttered Grandet, pouring out the black-currant cordial for her.

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked Eugénie, looking at her in concern.

"No, I managed to break the fall; I came down on my side."

"Well," said Grandet, "as to-day is Eugénie's birthday, I will mend your step for you. Somehow, you women-folk cannot manage to put your foot down in the corner, where it is still solid and safe."

Grandet took up the candle, left the three women without any other illumination in the room than the bright dancing firelight, and went to the bakehouse, where tools, nails, and odd pieces of wood were kept.

"Do you want any help?" Nanon called to him, when the first blow sounded on the staircase.

"No! no! I am an old hand at it," answered the cooper.

At this very moment, while Grandet was doing the repairs himself to his worm-eaten staircase, and whistling with all his might as memories of his young days came up in his mind, the three Cruchots knocked at the house-door.

"Oh, it's you, is it, M. Cruchot?" asked Nanon, as she took a look through the small square grating.

"Yes," answered the magistrate.

Nanon opened the door, and the glow of the firelight shone on the three Cruchots, who were groping in the archway.

"Oh! you have come to help us keep her birthday," Nanon said, as the scent of flowers reached her.

"Excuse me a moment, gentlemen," cried Grandet, who recognized the voices of his acquaintances; "I am your very humble servant! There is no pride about me; I am patching up a broken stair here myself."

"Go on, go on, M. Grandet! The charcoal-burner is mayor in his own house," said the magistrate sententiously. Nobody saw the allusion, and he had his laugh all to himself. Mme. and Mlle. Grandet rose to greet them. The magistrate took advantage of the darkness to speak to Eugénie.

"Will you permit me, mademoiselle, on the anniversary of your birthday, to wish you a long succession of prosperous years, and may you for long preserve the health with which you are blessed at present."

He then offered her such a bouquet of flowers as was seldom seen in Saumur; and, taking the heiress by both arms, gave her a kiss on either side of the throat, a fervent salute which brought the color into Eugénie's face. The magistrate was tall and thin, somewhat resembling a rusty nail; this was his notion of paying court.

"Do not disturb yourselves," said Grandet, coming back into the room. "Fine doings these of yours, M. le Président, on high days and holidays!"

"With mademoiselle beside him every day would be a holiday for my nephew," answered the Abbé Cruchot, also armed with a bouquet; and with that the Abbé kissed Eugénie's hand. As for M. Cruchot, he kissed her uncereemoniously on both cheeks, saying, "This sort of thing makes us feel older, eh? A whole year older every twelve months."

Grandet set down the candle in front of the brass clock on the chimney-piece; whenever a joke amused him he kept on repeating it till it was worn threadbare; he did so now.

"As to-day is Eugénie's birthday," he said, "let us have an illumination."

He carefully removed the branches from the two sconces, fitted the sockets into either pedestal, took from Nanon's hands a whole new candle wrapped in a scrap of paper, fixed it firmly in the socket, and lighted it. Then he went over to his wife and took up his position beside her, looking by turns at his daughter, his friends, and the two lighted candles.

The Abbé Cruchot was a fat, dumpy little man with a well-worn sandy peruke. His peculiar type of face might have belonged to some old lady whose life is spent at the card-table. At this moment he was stretching out his feet and displaying a very neat and strong pair of shoes with silver buckles on them.

"The des Grassins have not come round?" he asked.

"Not yet," answered Grandet.

"Are they sure to come?" put in the old notary, with various contortions of a countenance as full of holes as a colander.

"Oh! yes, I think they will come," said Mme. Grandet.

"Is the vintage over?" asked President de Bonfons, addressing Grandet; "are all your grapes gathered?"

"Yes, everywhere!" answered the old vine-grower, rising and walking up and down the length of the room; he straightened himself up as he spoke with a conscious pride that appeared in that word "everywhere."

As he passed by the door that opened into the passage, Grandet caught a glimpse of the kitchen; the fire was still alight, a candle was burning there, and big Nanon was about to begin her spinning by the hearth; she did not wish to intrude upon the birthday party.

"Nanon!" he called, stepping out into the passage. "Nanon! why ever don't you rake out the fire; put out the candle and come in here! *Pardieu!* the room is large enough to hold us all."

"But you are expecting grand visitors, sir."

"Have you any objection to them? They are all descended from Adam just as much as you are."

Grandet went back to the president.

"Have you sold your wine?" he inquired.

"Not I; I am holding it. If the wine is good now, it will be better still in two years' time. The growers, as you know, of course, are in a ring, and mean to keep prices up. The Belgians shall not have it all their own way this year. And if they go away, well and good, let them go; they will come back again."

"Yes; but we must hold firm," said Grandet in a tone that made the magistrate shudder.

"Suppose he should sell his wine behind our backs?" he thought.

At that moment another knock at the door announced the des Grassins, and interrupted a quiet talk between Mme. Grandet and the Abbé Cruchot.

Mme. des Grassins was a dumpy, lively little person with a pink-and-white complexion, one of those women for whom the course of life in a country town has flowed on with almost claustral tranquillity, and who, thanks to this regular and virtuous existence, are still youthful at the age of forty. They are something like the late roses in autumn,

which are fair and pleasant to the sight, but the almost scentless petals have a pinched look, there is a vague suggestion of coming winter about them. She dressed tolerably well, her gowns came from Paris, she was a leader of society in Saumur, and received on certain evenings. Her husband had been a quartermaster in the Imperial Guard, but he had retired from the army with a pension, after being badly wounded at Austerlitz. In spite of his consideration for Grandet, he still retained, or affected to retain, the bluff manners of a soldier.

“Good-day, Grandet,” he said, holding out his hand to the cooper with that wonted air of superiority with which he eclipsed the Cruchot faction. “Mademoiselle,” he added, addressing Eugénie, after a bow to Mme. Grandet, “you are always charming, ever good and fair, and what more can one wish you?”

With that he presented her with a small box, which a servant was carrying, and which contained a Cape heath, a plant only recently introduced into Europe, and very rare.

Mme. des Grassins embraced Eugénie very affectionately, squeezed her hand, and said, “I have commissioned Adolphe to give you my little birthday gift.”

A tall, fair-haired young man, somewhat pallid and weakly in appearance, came forward at this; his manners were passably good, although he seemed to be shy. He had just completed his law studies in Paris, where he had managed to spend eight or ten thousand francs over and above his allowance. He now kissed Eugénie on both cheeks, and laid a workbox with gilded silver fittings before her; it was a showy, trumpery thing enough, in spite of the little shield on the lid, on which an E. G. had been engraved in Gothic characters, a detail which gave an imposing air to the whole. Eugénie raised the lid with a little thrill of pleasure, the happiness was as complete as it was unlooked for—the happiness that brings bright color into a young girl’s face and makes her tremble with delight. Her eyes turned to her father as if to ask whether she might accept the gift; M. Grandet answered the mute inquiry

with a "Take it, my daughter!" in tones which would have made the reputation of an actor. The three Cruchots stood dumfounded when they saw the bright, delighted glance that Adolphe des Grassins received from the heiress, who seemed to be dazzled by such undreamed-of splendors.

M. des Grassins offered his snuff-box to Grandet, took a pinch himself, brushed off a few stray specks from his blue coat and from the ribbon of the Legion of Honor at his buttonhole, and looked at the Cruchots, as though to say, "Parry that thrust if you can!" Mme. des Grassins' eyes fell on the blue glass jars in which the Cruchots' bouquets had been set. She looked at their gifts with the innocent air of pretended interest which a satirical woman knows how to assume upon occasion. It was a delicate crisis. The Abbé got up and left the others, who were forming a circle round the fire, and joined Grandet in his promenade up and down the room. When the two elders had reached the embrasure of the window at the farther end, away from the group by the fire, the priest said in the miser's ear, "Those people yonder are throwing their money out of the windows."

"What does that matter to me, so long as it comes my way?" the old vine-grower answered.

"If you had a mind to give your daughter golden scissors, you could very well afford it," said the Abbé.

"I shall give her something better than scissors," Grandet answered.

"What an idiot my nephew is!" thought the Abbé, as he looked at the magistrate, whose dark, ill-favored countenance was set off to perfection at that moment by a shock head of hair. "Why couldn't *he* have hit on some expensive piece of foolery?"

"We will take a hand at cards, Mme. Grandet," said Mme. des Grassins.

"But as we are all here, there are enough of us for two tables——"

"As to-day is Eugénie's birthday, why not all play together at *loto*?" said old Grandet; "these two children could join in the game."

The old cooper, who never played at any game whatever, pointed to his daughter and Adolphe.

"Here, Nanon, move the tables out."

"We will help you, Mlle. Nanon," said Mme. des Grassins cheerfully; she was thoroughly pleased, because she had pleased Eugénie.

"I have never seen anything so pretty anywhere," the heiress had said to her. "I have never been so happy in my life before."

"It was Adolphe who chose it," said Mme. des Grassins in the girl's ear; "he brought it from Paris."

"Go your ways, accursed scheming woman," muttered the magistrate to himself. "If you or your husband ever find yourselves in a court of law, you shall be hard put to it to gain the day."

The notary, calmly seated in his corner, watched the Abbé, and said to himself, "The des Grassins may do what they like; my fortune and my brother's and my nephew's fortunes altogether mount up to eleven hundred thousand francs. The des Grassins, at the very utmost, have only half as much, and they have a daughter. Let them give whatever they like, all will be ours some day—the heiress and her presents too."

Two tables were in readiness by half-past eight o'clock. Mme. de Grassins, with her winning ways, had succeeded in placing her son next to Eugénie. The actors in the scene, so commonplace in appearance, so full of interest beneath the surface, each provided with slips of pasteboard of various colors and blue glass counters, seemed to be listening to the little jokes made by the old notary, who never drew a number without making some remark upon it, but they were all thinking of M. Grandet's millions. The old cooper himself eyed the group with a certain self-complacency; he looked at Mme. des Grassins with her pink feathers and her fresh toilet, at the banker's soldierly face, at Adolphe, at the magistrate, at the Abbé and the notary, and within himself he said: "They are all after my crowns; that is what they are here for. It is for my daughter that they come to be bored here. Aha! and my daughter is for none

of them, and all these people are so many harpoons to be used in my fishing."

The merriment of this family party, the laughter, only sincere when it came from Eugénie or her mother, and to which the low whirring of Nanon's spinning-wheel made an accompaniment, the sordid meanness playing for high stakes, the young girl herself, like some rare bird, the innocent victim of its high value, tracked down and snared by specious pretenses of friendship; taken altogether, it was a sorry comedy that was being played in the old gray-painted parlor, by the dim light of the two candles. Was it not, however, a drama of all time, played out everywhere all over the world, but here reduced to its simplest expression? Old Grandet towered above the other actors, turning all this sham affection to his own account, and reaping a rich harvest from this simulated friendship. His face hovered above the scene like the interpretation of an evil dream. He was like the incarnation of the one god who yet finds worshipers in modern times, of money and the power of wealth.

With him the gentler and sweeter impulses of human life only occupied the second place; but they so filled three purer hearts there that there was no room in them for other thoughts—the hearts of Nanon, and of Eugénie and her mother. And yet, how much ignorance mingled with their innocent simplicity! Eugénie and her mother knew nothing of Grandet's wealth; they saw everything through a medium of dim ideas, peculiar to their own narrow world, and neither desired nor despised money, accustomed as they were to do without it. Nor were they conscious of an uncongenial atmosphere; the strength of their feelings, their inner life, made of them a strange exception in this gathering, wholly intent upon material interests. Appalling is the condition of man; there is no drop of happiness in his lot but has its source in ignorance.

Just as Mme. Grandet had won sixteen sous, the largest amount that had ever been punted beneath that roof, and big Nanon was beaming with delight at the sight of madame pocketing that splendid sum, there was a knock at the house-

door, so sudden and so loud that it startled the women for the moment.

"No one in Saumur would knock in that way!" said the notary.

"What do they thump like that for?" said Nanon. "Do they want to break our door down?"

"Who the devil is it?" cried Grandet.

Nanon took up one of the two candles and went to open the door. Grandet followed her.

"Grandet! Grandet!" cried his wife; a vague terror seized her, and she hurried to the door of the room.

The players all looked at each other.

"Suppose we go too?" said M. des Grassins. "That knock means no good, it seemed to me."

But M. des Grassins scarcely caught a glimpse of a young man's face and of a porter who was carrying two huge trunks and an assortment of carpet bags, before Grandet turned sharply on his wife and said:

"Go back to your loto, Mme. Grandet, and leave me to settle with this gentleman here."

With that he slammed the parlor door, and the loto players sat down again, but they were too much excited to go on with the game.

"Is it anyone who lives in Saumur, M. des Grassins?" his wife inquired.

"No, a traveler."

"Then he must have come from Paris."

"As a matter of fact," said the notary, drawing out a heavy antique watch, a couple of fingers' breadth in thickness, and not unlike a Dutch punt in shape, "as a matter of fact, it is nine o'clock. *Peste!* the mail-coach is not often behind time."

"Is he young looking?" put in the Abbé Cruchot.

"Yes," answered M. des Grassins. "The luggage he has with him must weigh three hundred kilos at least."

"Nanon does not come back," said Eugénie.

"It must be some relation of yours," the president remarked.

"Let us put down our stakes," said Mme. Grandet gently.

"M. Grandet was vexed, I could tell that by the sound of his voice, and perhaps he would be displeased if he came in and found us all discussing his affairs."

"Mademoiselle," Adolphe addressed his neighbor, "it will be your cousin Grandet no doubt, a very nice-looking young fellow whom I once met at a ball at M. de Nucingen's."

Adolphe went no further, his mother stamped on his foot under the table. Aloud, she asked him for two sous for his stake, adding in an undertone, meant only for his ears, "Will you hold your tongue, you great silly!"

They could hear the footsteps of Nanon and the porter on the staircase, but Grandet returned to the room almost immediately, and just behind him came the traveler who had excited so much curiosity, and loomed so large in the imaginations of those assembled; indeed, his sudden descent into their midst might be compared to the arrival of a snail in a beehive, or the entrance of a peacock into some humdrum village poultry-yard.

"Take a seat near the fire," said Grandet, addressing the stranger.

The young man looked round the room and bowed very gracefully before seating himself. The men rose and bowed politely in return, the women courtesied rather ceremoniously.

"You are feeling cold, I expect, sir," said Mme. Grandet; "you have no doubt come from——"

"Just like the women!" broke in the good man, looking up from the letter which he held in his hand. "Do let the gentleman have a little peace."

"But, father, perhaps the gentleman wants something after his journey," said Eugénie.

"He has a tongue in his head," the vine-grower answered severely.

The stranger alone felt any surprise at this scene, the rest were quite used to the worthy man and his arbitrary behavior. But after the two inquiries had received the summary answers, the stranger rose and stood with his back to the fire, held out a foot to the blaze, so as to warm the soles of his boots, and said to Eugénie, "Thank you,

cousin, I dined at Tours. And I do not require anything," he added, glancing at Grandet; "I am not in the least tired."

"Do you come from Paris?" (it was Mme. des Grassins who now put the inquiry).

M. Charles (for this was the name borne by the son of M. Grandet of Paris), hearing someone question him, took out an eyeglass that hung suspended from his neck by a cord, fixed it in his eye, made a deliberate survey of the objects upon the table and of the people sitting round it, eyed Mme. des Grassins very coolly, and said (when he had completed his survey), "Yes, madame. You are playing at *loto*, aunt," he added: "pray go on with your game, it is too amusing to be broken off——"

"I knew it was the cousin," thought Mme. des Grassins, and she gave him a side glance from time to time.

"Forty-seven," cried the old Abbé. "Keep count. Mme. des Grassins, that is your number, is it not?"

M. des Grassins put down a counter on his wife's card; the lady herself was not thinking of *loto*, her mind was full of melancholy forebodings, she was watching Eugénie and the cousin from Paris. She saw how the heiress now and then stole a glance at her cousin, and the banker's wife could easily discover in those glances a *crescendo* of amazement or of curiosity.

There was certainly a strange contrast between M. Charles Grandet, a handsome young man of two-and-twenty, and the worthy provincials, who, tolerably disgusted already with his aristocratic airs, were scornfully studying the stranger with a view to making game of him. This requires some explanation.

At two-and-twenty childhood is not so very far away, and youth, on the borderland, has not finally and forever put away childish things; Charles Grandet's vanity was childish, but perhaps ninety-nine young men out of a hundred would have been carried away by it and behaved exactly as he did.

Some days previously his father had bidden him to go on a visit of several months to his uncle in Saumur; per-

haps M. Grandet (of Paris) had Eugénie in his mind. Charles, launched in this way into a country town for the first time in his life, had his own ideas. He would make his appearance in provincial society with all the superiority of a young man of fashion; he would reduce the neighborhood to despair by his splendor; he would inaugurate a new epoch, and introduce all the latest and most ingenious refinement of Parisian luxury. To be brief, he meant to devote more time at Saumur than in Paris to the care of his nails, and to carry out schemes of elaborate and studied refinements in dress at his leisure; there should be none of the not ungraceful negligence of attire which a young man of fashion sometimes affects.

So Charles took with him into the country the most charming of shooting costumes, the sweetest thing in hunting-knives and sheaths, and a perfect beauty of a rifle. He packed up a most tasteful collection of waistcoats: gray, white, black, beetle-green shot with gold, speckled and spangled; double waistcoats, waistcoats with rolled collars, stand-up collars, turned-down collars, open at the throat, buttoned up to the chin with a row of gold buttons. He took samples of all the ties and cravats in favor at that epoch. He took two of Buisson's coats. He took his finest linen, and the dressing-case with gold fittings that his mother had given him. He took all his dandy's paraphernalia, not forgetting an enchanting little writing-case, the gift of the most amiable of women (for him at least), a great lady whom he called Annette, and who at that moment was traveling with her husband in Scotland, a victim to suspicions which demanded the temporary sacrifice of her happiness.

In short, his cargo of Parisian frivolities was as complete as it was possible to make it; nothing had been omitted, from the horsewhip, useful as a preliminary, to the pair of richly-chased and mounted pistols that terminate a duel. There was all the plowing gear required by a young idler in the field of life.

His father had told him to travel alone and modestly, and he had obeyed. He had come in the coupé of the diligence,

which he secured all to himself; and was not ill-satisfied to save wear, in this way, to a smart and comfortable traveling carriage which he had ordered, and in which he meant to go to meet his Annette, the aforesaid great lady who—etc., and whom he was to rejoin next June at Baden-Baden.

Charles expected to meet scores of people during his visit to his uncle; he expected to have some shooting on his uncle's land; he expected, in short, to find a large house on a large estate; he had not thought to find his relatives in Saumur at all; he had only found out that they lived there by asking the way to Froidfond, and even after this discovery he expected to see them in a large mansion. But whether his uncle lived in Saumur or at Froidfond, he was determined to make his first appearance properly, so he had assumed a most fascinating traveling costume, made with the simplicity that is the perfection of art, a most *adorable* creation, to use the word which in those days expressed superlative praise of the special qualities of a thing or of a man. At Tours he had summoned a hairdresser, and his handsome chestnut hair was curled afresh. He had changed his linen and put on a black satin cravat, which, in combination with a round collar, made a very becoming setting for a pale and satirical face. A long overcoat, fitting tightly at the waist, gave glimpses of a cashmere waistcoat with a rolled collar, and beneath this again a second waistcoat of some white material. His watch was carelessly thrust into a side pocket, and save in so far as a gold chain secured it to a buttonhole, its continuance there appeared to be purely accidental. His gray trousers were buttoned at the sides, and the seams were adorned with designs embroidered in black silk. A pair of gray gloves had nothing to dread from contact with a gold-headed cane, which he managed to admiration. A discriminating taste was evinced throughout the costume, and shone conspicuous in the traveling cap. Only a Parisian, and a Parisian moreover from some remote and lofty sphere, could trick himself out in such attire, and bring all its absurd details into harmony by coxcombry carried to such a pitch that it ceased to be ridiculous; this young man carried it off, moreover, with

a swaggering air befitting a dead shot, conscious of the possession of a handsome pair of pistols and the good graces of an Annette.

If, moreover, you wish to thoroughly understand the surprise with which the Saumurois and the young Parisian mutually regarded each other, you must behold, as did the former, the radiant vision of this elegant traveler shining in the gloomy old room, as well as the figures that composed the family picture that met the stranger's eyes. There sat the Cruchots; try to imagine them.

To begin with, all three took snuff, with utter disregard of personal cleanliness or of the black deposit with which their shirt frills were encrusted. Their limp silk handkerchiefs were twisted into a thick rope, and wound tightly about their necks. Their collars were crumpled and soiled, their linen was dingy; there was such a vast accumulation of underwear in their presses, that it was only necessary to wash twice in the year, and the linen acquired a bad color with lying by. Age and ugliness might have wrought together to produce a masterpiece in them. Their hard-featured, furrowed, and wrinkled faces were in keeping with their creased and threadbare clothing, and both they and their garments were worn, shrunken, twisted out of shape. Dwellers in country places are apt to grow more or less slovenly and careless of their appearance; they cease by degrees to dress for others; the career of a pair of gloves is indefinitely prolonged, there is a general want of freshness and a decided neglect of detail. The slovenliness of the Cruchots, therefore, was not conspicuous; they were in harmony with the rest of the company, for there was one point on which both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were agreed for the most part—they held the fashions in horror.

The Parisian assumed his eyeglass again in order to study the curious accessories of the room; his eyes traveled over the rafters in the ceiling, over the dingy panels covered with fly-spots in sufficient abundance to punctuate the whole of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* and the *Moniteur* besides. The lotto players looked up at this and stared at him; if a giraffe had been in their midst they could hardly

have gazed with more eager curiosity. Even M. des Grassins and his son, who had beheld a man of fashion before in the course of their lives, shared in the general amazement; perhaps they felt the indefinable influence of the general feeling about the stranger, perhaps they regarded him not unapprovingly. "You see how they dress in Paris," their satirical glances seemed to say to their neighbors.

One and all were at liberty to watch Charles at their leisure, without any fear of offending the master of the house, for by this time Grandet was deep in a long letter which he held in his hand. He had taken the only candle from the table beside him, without any regard for the convenience of his guests or for their pleasure.

It seemed to Eugénie, who had never in her life beheld such a paragon, that her cousin was some seraphic vision, some creature fallen from the skies. The perfume exhaled by those shining locks, so gracefully curled, was delightful to her. She would fain have passed her fingers over the delicate, smooth surface of those wonderful gloves. She envied Charles his little hands, his complexion, the youthful refinement of his features. In fact, the sight of her cousin gave her the same sensations of exquisite pleasure that might be aroused in a young man by the contemplation of the fanciful portraits of ladies in English "Keepsakes," portraits drawn by Westall and engraved by Finden, with a burin so skillful that you fear to breathe upon the vellum surface lest the celestial vision should disappear. And yet—how should the impression produced by a young exquisite upon an ignorant girl whose life was spent in darning stockings and mending her father's clothes, in the dirty wainscoted window embrasure whence, in an hour, she saw scarcely one passer-by in the silent street, how should her dim impressions be conveyed by such an image as this?

Charles drew from his pocket a handkerchief embroidered by the great lady who was traveling in Scotland. It was a dainty piece of work wrought by love, in hours that were lost to love; Eugénie gazed at her cousin, and wondered, was he really going to use it? Charles's manners, his way of adjusting his eyeglass, his superciliousness, his affecta-

tions, his manifest contempt for the little box which had but lately given so much pleasure to the wealthy heiress, and which in his eyes seemed to be a very absurd piece of rubbish; everything, in short, which had given offense to the Cruchotins and the Grassinistes pleased Eugénie so much that she lay awake for long that night thinking about this phœnix of a cousin.

Meanwhile the numbers were drawn but languidly, and very soon the loto came to an end altogether. Big Nanon came into the room and said aloud, "Madame, you will have to give me some sheets to make the gentleman's bed."

Mme. Grandet disappeared with Nanon, and Mme. des Grassins said in a low voice, "Let us keep our sous, and give up the game."

Each player took back his coin from the chipped saucer which held the stakes. Then there was a general stir, and a wheeling movement in the direction of the fire.

"Is the game over?" inquired Grandet, still reading his letter.

"Yes, yes," answered Mme. des Grassins, seating herself next to Charles.

Eugénie left the room to help her mother and Nanon, moved by a thought that came with the vague feeling that stirred her heart for the first time. If she had been questioned by a skillful confessor, she would have no doubt admitted that her thought was neither for Nanon nor for her mother, but that she was seized with a restless and urgent desire to see that all was right in her cousin's room, to busy herself on her cousin's account, to see that nothing was forgotten, to think of everything he might require, and to make sure that it was there, to make certain that everything was as neat and pretty as might be. She alone, so Eugénie thought already, could enter into her cousin's ideas and understand his tastes.

As a matter of fact, she came just at the right moment. Her mother and Nanon were about to leave the room in the belief that it was all in readiness; Eugénie convinced them in a moment that everything was yet to do. She filled Nanon's head with these ideas: the sheets had not been

aired, Nanon must bring the warming-pan, there were ashes, there was a fire downstairs. She herself covered the old table with a clean white cloth, and told Nanon to mind and be sure to change it every morning. There must be a good fire in the room; she overcame her mother's objections, she induced Nanon to put a good supply of firewood outside in the passage, and to say nothing about it to her father. She ran downstairs into the parlor, sought in one of the sideboards for an old japanned tray which had belonged to the late M. de la Bertellière, and from the same source she procured a hexagonal crystal glass, a little gilt spoon with almost all the gilding rubbed off, and an old slender-necked glass bottle with Cupids engraved upon it; these she deposited in triumph on a corner of the chimney-piece. More ideas had crowded up in her mind during that one quarter of an hour than in all the years since she had come into the world.

"Mamma," she began, "he will never be able to bear the smell of a tallow candle. Suppose that we buy a wax candle?"

She fled, lightly as a bird, to find her purse, and drew thence the five francs which she had received for the month's expenses.

"Here, Nanon, be quick."

"But what will your father say?"

This dreadful objection was raised by Mme. Grandet, when she saw her daughter with an old Sèvres china sugar-basin which Grandet had brought back with him from the château at Froidfond.

"And where is the sugar to come from?" she went on. "Are you mad?"

"Nanon can easily buy the sugar when she goes for the candle, mamma."

"But how about your father?"

"Is it a right thing that his nephew should not have a glass of *eau sucrée* [sugar and water] to drink if he happens to want it? Besides, he will not notice it."

"Your father always notices things," said Mme. Grandet, shaking her head.

Nanon hesitated; she knew her master.

“Do go, Nanon; it is my birthday to-day, you know!”

Nanon burst out laughing in spite of herself at the first joke her young mistress had ever been known to make, and did her bidding.

While Eugénie and her mother were doing their best to adorn the room which M. Grandet had allotted to his nephew, Mme. des Grassins was bestowing her attention on Charles, and making abundant use of her eyes as she did so.

“You are very brave,” she said, “to leave the pleasures of the capital in winter in order to come to stay in Saumur. But if you are not frightened away at first sight of us, you shall see that even here we can amuse ourselves.” And she gave him a languishing glance, in true provincial style.

Women in the provinces are wont to affect a demure and staid demeanor, which gives a furtive and eager eloquence to their eyes, a peculiarity which may be noted in ecclesiastics, for whom every pleasure is stolen or forbidden. Charles was so thoroughly out of his element in this room, it was all so far removed from the great château and the splendid surroundings in which he had thought to find his uncle, that, on paying closer attention to Mme. des Grassins, she almost reminded him of Parisian faces half obliterated already by these strange, new impressions. He responded graciously to the advances which had been made to him, and naturally they fell into conversation.

Mme. des Grassins gradually lowered her voice to tones suited to the nature of her confidences. Both she and Charles Grandet felt a need of mutual confidence, of explanations and an understanding; so after a few minutes spent in coquettish chatter and jests that covered a serious purpose, the wily provincial dame felt free to converse without fear of being overheard, under cover of a conversation on the sale of the vintage, the one all-absorbing topic at that moment in Saumur.

“If you will honor us with a visit,” she said, “you will certainly do us a pleasure; my husband and I shall be very

glad to see you. Our salon is the only one in Saumur where you will meet both the wealthy merchant society and the noblesse. We ourselves belong in a manner to both; they do not mix with each other at all except at our house; they come to us because they find it amusing. My husband, I am proud to say, is very highly thought of in both circles. So we will do our best to beguile the tedium of your stay. If you are going to remain with the Grandets, what will become of you! *Bon Dieu!* Your uncle is a miser, his mind runs on nothing but his vine-cuttings; your aunt is a saint who cannot put two ideas together; and your cousin is a silly little thing, a common sort of girl, with no breeding and no money, who spends her life in mending dishcloths."

"'Tis a very pretty woman," said Charles to himself; Mme. des Grassins' coquettish glances had not been thrown away upon him.

"It seems to me that you mean to monopolize the gentleman," said the big banker, laughing, to his wife, an unlucky observation, followed by remarks more or less spiteful from the notary and the president; but the Abbé gave them a shrewd glance, took a pinch of snuff, and handed his snuff-box to the company, while he gave expression to their thoughts, "Where could the gentleman have found anyone better qualified to do the honors of Saumur?" he said.

"Come, Abbé, what do you mean by that?" asked M. des Grassins.

"It is meant, sir, in the most flattering sense for you, for madame, for the town of Saumur, and for this gentleman," added the shrewd ecclesiastic, turning towards Charles. Without appearing to pay the slightest heed to their talk, he had managed to guess the drift of it.

Adolphe des Grassins spoke at last, with what was meant to be an off-hand manner. "I do not know," he said, addressing Charles, "whether you have any recollection of me; I once had the pleasure of dancing in the same quadrille at a ball given by M. le Baron de Nucingen, and——"

"I remember it perfectly," answered Charles, surprised to find himself the object of general attention.

"Is this gentleman your son?" he asked of Mme. des Grassins.

The Abbé gave her a spiteful glance.

"Yes, I am his mother," she answered.

"You must have been very young when you came to Paris?" Charles went on, speaking to Adolphe.

"We cannot help ourselves, sir," said the Abbé. "Our babes are scarcely weaned before we send them to Babylon."

Mme. des Grassins gave the Abbé a strangely penetrating glance; she seemed to be seeking the meaning of those words.

"You must go into the country," the Abbé went on, "if you want to find women not much on the other side of thirty, with a grown-up son a licentiate of law, who look as fresh and youthful as Mme. des Grassins. It only seems like the other day when the young men and the ladies stood on chairs to see you dance, madame," the Abbé added, turning towards his fair antagonist; "your triumphs are as fresh in my memory as if they had happened yesterday."

"Oh! the old wretch!" said Mme. des Grassins to herself, "is it possible that he has guessed?"

"It looks as though I should have a great success in Saumur," thought Charles. He unbuttoned his overcoat and stood with his hands in his waistcoat pocket, gazing into space, striking the attitude which Chantrey thought fit to give to Byron in his statue of that poet.

Meanwhile Grandet's inattention, or rather his preoccupation, during the reading of his letter had escaped neither the notary nor the magistrate. Both of them tried to guess at the contents by watching the almost imperceptible changes in the worthy man's face, on which all the light of a candle was concentrated. The vine-grower was hard put to it to preserve his wonted composure. His expression must be left to the imagination, but here is the fatal letter:

"MY BROTHER,—It is nearly twenty-three years now since we saw each other. The last time we met it was to make arrangements for my marriage, and we parted in high spirits. Little did I then think, when you were congratulat-

ing yourself on our prosperity, that one day you would be the sole hope and stay of our family. By the time that this letter reaches your hands, I shall be no more. In my position, I could not survive the disgrace of bankruptcy; I have held up my head above the surface till the last moment, hoping to weather the storm; it is all of no use, I must sink now. Just after the failure of my stockbroker came the failure of Roguin (my notary); my last resources have been swept away, and I have nothing left. It is my heavy misfortune to owe nearly four millions; my assets only amount to twenty-five per cent. of my debts. I hold heavy stocks of wine, and, owing to the abundance and good quality of your vintages, they have fallen ruinously in value. In three days' time all Paris will say, 'M. Grandet was a rogue!' and I, honest though I am, shall lie wrapped in a winding sheet of infamy. I have despoiled my own son of his mother's fortune and of the spotless name on which I have brought disgrace. He knows nothing of all this—the unhappy child whom I have idolized. Happily for him, he did not know when we bade each other good-by, and my heart overflowed with tenderness for him, how soon it should cease to beat. Will he not curse me some day? Oh! my brother, my brother, a child's curse is an awful thing! If we curse our children, they may appeal against us, but their curses cling to us forever! Grandet, you are my older brother, you must shield me from this; do not let Charles say bitter things of me when I am lying in my grave. Oh! my brother, if every word in this letter were written in my tears, in my blood, it would not cost me such bitter anguish, for then I should be weeping, bleeding, dying, and the agony would be ended; but now I am still suffering—I see the death before me with dry eyes. You therefore are Charles's father now! He has no relations on his mother's side for reasons which you know. Why did I not defer to social prejudices? Why did I yield to love? Why did I marry the natural daughter of a noble? Charles is the last of his family; he is alone in the world. Oh! my unhappy boy, my son!— Listen, Grandet, I am asking nothing for myself, and you could scarcely satisfy my creditors

if you would; your fortune cannot be sufficient to meet a demand of three millions; it is for my son's sake that I write. You must know, my brother, that as I think of you my petition is made with clasped hands; that this is my dying prayer to you. Grandet, I know that you will be a father to him; I know that I shall not ask in vain, and the sight of my pistols does not cause me a pang.

“And then Charles is very fond of me; I was kind to him, I never said him nay; he will not curse me! For the rest, you will see how sweet-tempered and obedient he is; he takes after his mother; he will never give you any trouble, poor boy! He is accustomed to luxurious ways; he knows nothing of the hardships that you and I experienced in the early days when we were poor—— And now he has not a penny, and he is alone in the world, for all his friends are sure to leave him, and it is I who have brought these humiliations upon him. Ah! if I had only the power to send him straight to heaven now, where his mother is! This is madness! To go back to my misfortunes and Charles's share in them. I have sent him to you so that you may break the news of my death and explain to him what his future must be. Be a father to him; ah! more than that, be an indulgent father! Do not expect him to give up his idle ways all at once; it would kill him. On my knees I beg him to renounce all claims to his mother's fortune; but I need not ask that of him, his sense of honor will prevent him from adding himself to the list of my creditors; see that he resigns his claims when the right time comes. And you must lay everything before him, Grandet—the struggle and the hardships that he will have to face in the life that I have spoiled for him; and then if he has any tenderness still left for me, tell him from me that all is not lost for him—be sure you tell him that. Work, which was our salvation, can restore the fortune which I have lost; and if he will listen to his father's voice, which would fain make itself heard a little while from the grave, let him leave this country and go to the Indies! And, brother, Charles is honest and energetic; you will help him with his first trading venture, I know you will; he would die sooner than not re-

pay you; you will do as much as that for him, Grandet, or you will lay up regrets for yourself. Ah! if my boy finds no kindness and no help in you, I shall forever pray God to punish your hard-heartedness. If I could have withheld a few payments, I might have saved a little sum for him—he surely has a right to some of his mother's fortune—but the payments at the end of the month taxed all my resources, and I could not manage it. I would fain have died with my mind at rest about his future; I wish I could have received your solemn promise; coming straight from your hand it would have brought warmth with it for me; but time presses. Even while Charles is on his way, I am compelled to file my schedule. My affairs are all in order; I am endeavoring so to arrange everything that it will be evident that my failure is due neither to carelessness nor to dishonesty, but simply to disasters which I could not help. Is it not for Charles's sake that I take these pains? Farewell, my brother. May God bless you in every way for the generosity with which you (as I cannot doubt) will accept and fulfill this trust. There will be one voice that will never cease to pray for you in the world whither we must all go sooner or later, and where I am even now.

“VICTOR-ANGE-GUILLAUME GRANDET.”

“So you are having a chat?” said old Grandet, folding up the letter carefully in the original creases, and putting it into his waistcoat pocket.

He looked at his nephew in a shy and embarrassed way, seeking to dissemble his feelings and his calculations.

“Do you feel warmer?”

“I am very comfortable, my dear uncle.”

“Well, whatever are the women after?” his uncle went on; the fact that his nephew would sleep in the house had by that time slipped from his memory. Eugénie and Mme. Grandet came into the room as he spoke.

“Is everything ready upstairs?” the good man inquired. He had now quite recovered himself, and recollected the facts of the case.

“Yes, father.”

"Very well then, nephew, if you are feeling tired, Nanon will show you to your room. Lord! there is nothing very smart about it, but you will overlook that here among poor vine-growers, who never have a penny to bless themselves with. The taxes swallow up everything we have."

"We don't want to be intrusive, Grandet," said the banker. "You and your nephew may have some things to talk over; we will wish you good-evening. Good-by till to-morrow."

Everyone rose at this, and took leave after their several fashions. The old notary went out under the archway to look for his lantern, lighted it, and offered to see the des Grassins to their house. Mme. des Grassins had not been prepared for the event which had brought the evening so early to a close, and her maid had not appeared.

"Will you honor me by taking my arm, madame?" said the Abbé Cruchot, addressing Mme. des Grassins.

"Thank you, M. l'Abbé," said the lady dryly; "my son is with me."

"I am not a compromising acquaintance for a lady," the Abbé continued.

"Take M. Cruchot's arm," said her husband.

The Abbé, with the fair lady on his arm, walked on quickly for several paces, so as to put a distance between them and the rest of the party.

"That young man is very good-looking, madame," he said, with a pressure on her arm to give emphasis to the remark. "'Tis good-by to the baskets, the vintage is over! You must give up Mlle. Grandet; Eugénie is meant for her cousin. Unless he happens to be smitten with some fair face in Paris, your son Adolphe will have yet another rival——"

"Nonsense, M. l'Abbé. It will not be long before the young man will find out that Eugénie is a girl who has nothing to say for herself; and she has gone off in looks. Did you notice her? She was as yellow as a quince this evening."

"Which, possibly, you have already pointed out to her cousin?"

"Indeed, I have not taken the trouble——"

"If you always sit beside Eugénie, madame," interrupted the Abbé, "you will not need to tell the young man much about his cousin; he can make his own comparisons."

"He promised me at once to come to dine with us the day after to-morrow."

"Ah! madame," said the Abbé, "if you would only——"

"Would only what, M. l'Abbé? Do you mean to put evil suggestions into my mind? I have not come to the age of thirty-nine with a spotless reputation (Heaven be thanked) to compromise myself now—not for the empire of the Great Mogul! We are both of us old enough to know what that kind of talk means; and I must say that your ideas do not square very well with your sacred calling. For shame! this is worthy of *Faublas*."

"So you have read *Faublas*?"

"No, M. l'Abbé; *Les Liaisons dangereuses* [dangerous entanglements] is what I meant to say."

"Oh! that book is infinitely more moral," said the Abbé, laughing. "But you would make me out to be as depraved as young men are nowadays. I only meant that you——"

"Do you dare to tell me that you meant no harm? The thing is plain enough. If that young fellow (who certainly is good-looking, that I grant you) paid court to me, it would not be for the sake of my interest with that cousin of his. In Paris, I know, there are tender mothers who sacrifice themselves thus for their children's happiness and welfare, but we are not in Paris, M. l'Abbé."

"No, madame."

"And," continued she, "neither Adolphe nor I would purchase a hundred millions at such a price."

"Madame, I said nothing about a hundred millions. Perhaps such a temptation might have been too much for either of us. Still, in my opinion, an honest woman may indulge in a little harmless coquetry, in the strictest propriety; it is a part of her social duties, and——"

"Do you think so?"

"Do we not owe it to ourselves, madame, to endeavor to be as agreeable as possible to others?—Permit me to blow

my nose. Take my word for it, madame," resumed the Abbé, "that he certainly regarded you with rather more admiration than he saw fit to bestow on me, but I can forgive him for honoring beauty rather than gray hairs——"

"It is perfectly clear," said the president in his thick voice, "why M. Grandet of Paris is sending his son to Saumur; he has made up his mind to make a match——"

"Then why should the cousin have dropped from the skies like this?" answered the notary.

"There is nothing in that," remarked M. des Grassins, "old Grandet is so close."

"Des Grassins," said his wife, "I have asked that young man to come and dine with us. So you must go to M. and Mme. de Larsonnière, dear, and ask them to come, and the du Hautoys; and they must bring that pretty girl of theirs, of course; I hope she will dress herself properly for once. Her mother is jealous of her, and makes her look such a figure. I hope that you gentlemen will do us the honor of coming too?" she added, stopping the procession in order to turn to the two Cruchots, who, seeing the Abbé in conversation with Mme. des Grassins, had fallen behind.

"Here we are at your door, madame," said the notary. The three Cruchots took leave of the three des Grassins, and on their way home the talent for pulling each other to pieces, which provincials possess in perfection, was fully called into play; the great event of the evening was exhaustively discussed, and all its bearings upon the respective positions of Cruchotins and Grassinistes were duly considered. Clearly it behooved both alike to prevent Eugénie from falling in love with her cousin, and to hinder Charles from thinking of Eugénie. Sly hints, plausible insinuations, faint praise, vindications undertaken with an air of candid friendliness—what resistance could the Parisian offer when the air hurtled with deceptive weapons such as these?

As soon as the four relatives were left alone in the great room, M. Grandet spoke to his nephew.

"We must go to bed. It is too late to begin to talk to-night of the business that brought you here; to-morrow will be time enough for that. We have breakfast here at

eight o'clock. At noon we take a snatch of something, a little fruit, a morsel of bread, and a glass of white wine, and, like Parisians, we dine at five o'clock. That is the way of it. If you care to take a look at the town, or to go into the country round about, you are quite free to do so. You will excuse me, if for business reasons, I cannot always accompany you. Very likely you will be told hereabouts that I am rich; 'tis always M. Grandet here and M. Grandet there. I let them talk. Their babble does not injure my credit in any way. But I have not a penny to bless myself with; and, old as I am, I work like any young journeyman who has nothing in the world but his plane and a pair of stout arms. Perhaps you will find out for yourself some of these days what a lot of work it takes to earn a crown when you have to toil and moil for it yourself. Here, Nanon, bring the candles."

"I hope you will find everything you want, nephew," said Mme. Grandet; "but if anything has been forgotten, you will call Nanon."

"It would be difficult to want anything, my dear aunt, for I believe I have brought all my things with me. Permit me to wish you and my young cousin good-night."

Charles took a lighted wax-candle from Nanon; it was a commodity of local manufacture, which had grown old in the shop, very dingy, very yellow, and so like the ordinary tallow variety that M. Grandet had no suspicion of the article of luxury before him; indeed, it never entered into his head to imagine that there could be such a thing in the house.

"I will show you the way," said the good man.

One of the doors in the dining-room gave immediate access to the archway and to the staircase; but to-night, out of compliment to his guest, Grandet went by way of the passage which separated the kitchen from the dining-room. A folding-door, with a large oval pane of glass let into it, closed in the passage at the end nearest the staircase, an arrangement intended to keep out the blasts of cold air that rushed through the archway. With a like end in view, strips of list had been nailed to the doors; but in winter the east

wind found its way in, and whistled none the less shrewdly about the house, and the dining-room was seldom even tolerably warm.

Nanon went out, drew the bolts on the entrance gate, fastened the door of the dining-room, went across to the stable to let loose a great wolf-dog with a cracked voice; it sounded as though the animal was suffering from laryngitis. His savage temper was well known, and Nanon was the only human being who could manage him. There was some wild strain in both these children of the fields; they understood each other.

Charles glanced round at the dingy yellow walls and smoke-begrimed ceiling, and saw how the crazy, worm-eaten stairs shook beneath his uncle's heavy tread; he was fast coming to his senses, this was sober reality indeed! The place looked like a hen-roost. He looked round questioningly at the faces of his aunt and cousin, but they were so thoroughly accustomed to the staircase and its peculiarities that it never occurred to them that it could cause any astonishment; they took his signal of distress for a simple expression of friendliness, and smiled back at him in the most amiable way. That smile was the last straw; the young man was at his wits' end.

"What the devil made my father send me here?" said he to himself.

Arrived on the first landing, he saw before him three doors painted a dull red-brown color; there were no moldings round any of them, so that they would have been scarcely visible in the dusty surface of the wall if it had not been for the very apparent heavy bars of iron with which they were embellished, and which terminated in a sort of rough ornamental design, as did the ends of the iron scutcheons which surrounded the keyholes. A door at the head of the stairs, which had once given entrance into the room over the kitchen, was evidently blocked up. As a matter of fact, the only entrance was through Grandet's own room, and this room over the kitchen was the vine-grower's sanctum.

Daylight was admitted into it by a single window which looked out upon the yard, and which, for greater security,

was protected by a grating of massive iron bars. The master of the house allowed no one, not even Mme. Grandet, to set foot in this chamber; he kept the right of entry to himself, and sat there, undisturbed and alone, like an alchemist in the midst of his crucibles. Here, no doubt, there was some cunningly-contrived and secret hiding-place; for here he stored up the title-deeds of his estates; here, too, he kept the delicately adjusted scales in which he weighed his gold louis; and here every night he made out receipts, wrote acknowledgments of sums received, and laid his schemes, so that other business men seeing Grandet never busy, and always prepared for every emergency, might have been excused for imagining that he had a fairy or familiar spirit at his beck and call. Here, no doubt, when Nanon's snoring shook the rafters, when the savage watchdog bayed and prowled about the yard, when Mme. Grandet and Eugénie were fast asleep, the old cooper would come to be with his gold, and hug himself upon it, and toy with it, and fondle it, and brood over it, and so, with the intoxication of the gold upon him, at last to sleep. The walls were thick, the closed shutters kept their secret. He alone had the key of this laboratory, where, if reports spoke truly, he pored over plans on which every fruit tree belonging to him was mapped out, so that he could reckon out his crops, so much to every vine stem; and his yield of timber, to a fagot.

The door of Eugénie's room was opposite this closed-up portal, the room occupied by M. and Mme. Grandet was at the end of the landing, and consisted of the entire front of the house. It was divided within by a partition, Mme. Grandet's chamber was next to Eugénie's, with which it communicated by a glass door; the other half of the room, separated from the mysterious cabinet by a thick wall, belonged to the master of the house. Goodman Grandet had cunningly lodged his nephew on the second story, in an airy garret immediately above his own room, so that he could hear every sound and inform himself of the young man's goings and comings, if the latter should take it into his head to leave his quarters.

Eugénie and her mother, arrived on the first landing,

kissed each other and said good-night; they took leave of Charles in a few formal words, spoken with an apparent indifference, which in her heart the girl was far from feeling, and went to their rooms.

"This is your room, nephew," said Grandet, addressing Charles as he opened the door. "If you should wish to go out, you will have to call Nanon; for if you don't it will be 'no more at present from your most obedient,' the dog will gobble you down before you know where you are. Good-night, sleep well. Ha! ha! the ladies have lighted a fire in your room," he went on.

Just at that moment big Nanon appeared, armed with a warming-pan.

"Did anyone ever see the like?" said M. Grandet. "Do you take my nephew for a sick woman; he is not an invalid. Just be off, Nanon! you and your hot ashes."

"But the sheets are damp, sir, and the gentleman looks as delicate as a woman."

"All right, go through with it, since you have taken it into your head," said Grandet, shrugging his shoulders, "but mind you don't set the place on fire," and the miser groped his way downstairs, muttering vaguely to himself.

Charles, breathless with astonishment, was left among his trunks. He looked round about him, at the sloping roof of the attic, at the wall-paper of a pattern peculiar to little country inns, bunches of flowers symmetrically arranged on a buff-colored background; he looked at the rough stone chimney-piece full of rifts and cracks (the mere sight of it sent a chill through him, in spite of the fire in the grate), at the ramshackle cane-seat chairs, at the open night-table large enough to hold a fair-sized sergeant-at-arms, at the strip of worn rag-carpet beside the canopied bedstead, at the curtains which shook every moment as if the whole worm-eaten structure would fall to pieces; finally, he turned his attention to big Nanon, and said earnestly—

"Look here, my good girl, am I really in M. Grandet's house? M. Grandet, formerly mayor of Saumur, and brother of M. Grandet of Paris?"

"Yes, sir, you are; and you are staying with a very kind, a very amiable and excellent gentleman. Am I to help you to unpack those trunks of yours?"

"Faith, yes, old soldier, I wish you would. Did you serve in the horse marines?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" chuckled Nanon. "What may they be? what are the horse marines? Are they old salts? Do they go to sea?"

"Here, look out my dressing-gown; it is in that portmanteau, and this is the key."

Nanon was overcome with astonishment at the sight of a green silk dressing-gown, embroidered with gold flowers after an antique pattern.

"Are you going to sleep in *that*?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"Holy Virgin! What a beautiful altar-cloth it would make for the parish church! Oh, my dear young gentleman, you should give it to the church, and you will save your soul, which you are like to lose for that thing. Oh! how nice you look in it. I will go and call mademoiselle to look at you."

"Come now, Nanon, since that is your name, will you hold your tongue, and let me go to bed. I will set my things straight to-morrow, and as you have taken such a fancy to my gown, you shall have a chance to save your soul. I am too good a Christian to take it away with me when I go; you shall have it, and you can do whatever you like with it."

Nanon stood stockstill, staring at Charles; she could not bring herself to believe that he really meant what he said.

"You are going to give that grand dressing-gown to *me*!" she said, as she turned to go. "The gentleman is dreaming already. Good-night."

"Good-night, Nanon. What anyhow am I doing here?" said Charles to himself, as he dropped off to sleep. "My father is no fool; I have not been sent here for nothing. Pooh! 'Serious business to-morrow,' as some old Greek wiseacre used to say."

"*Sainte Vierge!* how nice he is!" said Eugénie to herself in the middle of her prayers, and that night they remained unfinished.

Mme. Grandet alone lay down to rest, with no thought in her quiet mind. Through the door in the thin partition she could hear her husband pacing to and fro in his room. Like all sensitive and timid women, she had thoroughly studied the character of her lord and master. Just as the sea-mew foresees the coming storm, she knew by almost imperceptible signs that a tempest was raging in Grandet's mind, and, to use her own expression, she "lay like one dead" at such seasons. Grandet's eyes turned towards his sanctum; he looked at the door, which was lined with sheet iron on the inner side (he himself had seen to that), and muttered, "What a preposterous notion this is of my brother's, to leave his child to me! A pretty legacy! I haven't twenty crowns to spare, and what would twenty crowns be to a popinjay like that, who looked at my weather-glass as if it wasn't fit to light the fire with?"

And Grandet, meditating on the probable outcome of this mournful dying request, was perhaps more perturbed in spirit than the brother who had made it.

"Shall I really have that golden gown?" Nanon said, and she fell asleep wrapped round in her altar-cloth, dreaming for the first time in her life of shining embroideries and flowered brocade, just as Eugénie dreamed of love.

In a girl's innocent and uneventful life there comes a mysterious hour of joy when the sunlight spreads through the soul, and it seems to her that the flowers express the thoughts that rise within her, thoughts that are quickened by every heart-beat, only to blend in a vague feeling of longing, when the days are filled with innocent melancholy and delicious happiness. Children smile when they see the light for the first time, and when a girl dimly divines the presence of love in the world she smiles as she smiled in her babyhood. If light is the first thing that we learn to love, is not love like light in the heart? This moment had come for Eugénie; she saw the things of life clearly for the first time.

Early rising is the rule in the country, so, like most other girls, Eugénie was up betimes in the morning; this morning she rose earlier than usual, said her prayers, and began to dress; her toilet was henceforth to possess an interest unknown before. She began by brushing her chestnut hair, and wound the heavy plaits about her head, careful that no loose ends should escape from the braided coronet which made an appropriate setting for a face both frank and shy, a simple coiffure which harmonized with the girlish outlines.

As she washed her hands again and again in the cold spring water that roughened and reddened the skin, she looked down at her pretty rounded arms and wondered what her cousin did to have hands so soft and so white, and nails so shapely. She put on a pair of new stockings, and her best shoes, and laced herself carefully, without passing over a single eyelet-hole. For the first time in her life, in fact, she wished to look her best, and felt that it was pleasant to have a pretty new dress to wear, a becoming dress which was nicely made.

The church clock struck just as she had finished dressing; she counted the strokes, and was surprised to find that it was still only seven o'clock. She had been so anxious to have plenty of time for her toilet that she had risen too early, and now there was nothing left to do. Eugénie, in her ignorance, never thought of studying the position of a tress of hair, and of altering it a dozen times to criticise its effect; she simply folded her arms, sat down by the window, and looked out upon the yard, the long strip of garden, and the terraced gardens up above upon the ramparts.

It was a somewhat dreary outlook thus shut in by the grim rock walls, but not without a charm of its own, the mysterious beauty of quiet overshadowed gardens, or of wild and solitary places. Under the kitchen window there was a well with a stone coping round it; a pulley was suspended above the water from an iron bracket overgrown by a vine; the vine leaves were red and faded now that the autumn was nearly at an end, and the crooked stem was plainly visible as it wound its way to the house wall, and crept along

the house till it came to an end by the wood-stack, where the fagots were arranged with as much neatness and precision as the volumes on some booklover's shelves. The flag-stones in the yard were dark with age and mosses, and dank with the stagnant air of the place; weeds grew here and there among the chinks. The massive outworks of the old fortifications were green with moss, with here and there a long dark brown streak where the water dripped, and the eight tumble-down steps, which gave access to the garden at the farther end of the yard, were almost hidden by a tall growth of plants; the general effect of the crumbling stones had a vague resemblance to some crusader's tomb erected by his widow in the days of yore and long since fallen into ruin.

Along the low mouldering stone wall there was a fence of open lattice-work, rotten with age, and fast falling to pieces; overrun by various creeping plants that clambered over it at their own sweet will. A couple of stunted apple trees spread out their gnarled and twisted branches on either side of the wicket-gate that led into the garden—three straight gravel walks with strips of border in between, and a line of box-edging on either side; and at the farther end, underneath the ramparts, a sort of arbor of lime trees, and a row of raspberry canes. A huge walnut tree grew at the end nearest to the house, and almost overshadowed the cooper's strong-room with its spreading branches.

It was one of those soft bright autumn mornings peculiar to the districts along the Loire; there was not a trace of mist; the light frosty rime of the previous night was rapidly disappearing as the mild rays of the autumn sun shone on the picturesque surroundings, the old walls, the green tangled growth in the yard and garden.

All these things had been long familiar to Eugénie's eyes, but to-day it seemed to her that there was a new beauty about them. A throng of confused thoughts filled her mind as the sunbeams overflowed the world without. A vague, inexplicable new happiness stirred within her, and enveloped her soul, as a bright cloud might cling about some object in the material world. The quaint garden, the old walls, every detail in her little world seemed to be living through

this new experience with her; the nature without her was in harmony with her inmost thoughts. The sunlight crept along the wall till it reached a maiden-hair fern; the changing hues of a pigeon's breast shone from the thick fronds and glossy stems, and all Eugénie's future grew bright with radiant hopes. Henceforward the bit of wall, its pale flowers, its blue harebells and bleached grasses, was a pleasant sight for her; it called up associations which had all the charm of the memories of childhood.

The rustling sound made by the leaves as they fell to the earth, the echoes that came up from the court, seemed like answers to the girl's secret questionings as she sat and mused; she might have stayed there by the window all day and never have noticed how the hours went by, but other thoughts surged up within her soul. Again and again she rose and stood before the glass, and looked at herself, as a conscientious writer scrutinizes his work, criticises it, and says hard things about it to himself.

"I am not pretty enough for him!"

This was what Eugénie thought, in her humility, and the thought was fertile in suffering. The poor child did not do herself justice; but humility, or, more truly, fear, is born with love. Eugénie's beauty was of a robust type often found among the lower middle classes, a type which may seem somewhat wanting in refinement, but in her the beauty of the Venus of Milo was ennobled and purified by the beauty of Christian sentiment, which invests woman with a dignity unknown to ancient sculptors. Her head was very large; the masculine but delicate outlines of her forehead recalled the Jupiter of Phidias; all the radiance of her pure life seemed to shine from the clear gray eyes. An attack of smallpox, so mild that it had left no scars on the oval face or features, had yet somewhat blurred their fresh fair coloring, and coarsened the smooth and delicate surface, still so fine and soft that her mother's gentle kiss left a passing trace of faint red on her cheek. Perhaps her nose was a little too large, but it did not contradict the kindly and affectionate expression of the mouth, and the red lips covered with finely etched lines. Her throat was daintily rounded. There

was something that attracted attention and stirred the imagination in the curving lines of her figure, covered to the throat by her high-necked dress; no doubt she possessed little of the grace that is due to the toilet, and her tall frame was strong rather than lissome, but this was not without its charm for judges of beauty.

For Eugénie was both tall and strongly built. She had nothing of the prettiness that ordinary people admire; but her beauty was unmistakable, and of a kind in which artists alone delight. A painter in quest of an exalted and spiritual type, searching women's faces for the beauty which Raphael dreamed of and conjured into being, the eyes full of proud humility, the pure outlines, often due to some chance inspiration of the artist, but which a virtuous and Christian life can alone acquire or preserve—a painter haunted by this ideal would have seen at once in Eugénie Grandet's face her unconscious and innate nobility of soul, a world of love behind the quiet brow, and in the way she had with her eyelids and in her eyes that divine something which baffles description. There was a serene tranquillity about her features, unspoiled and unwearied by the expression of pleasure; it was as if you watched, across some placid lake, the shadowy outlines of hills far off against the sky. The beauty of Eugénie's face, so quiet and so softly colored, was like that of some fair, half-opened flower about which the light seems to hover; in its quality of restfulness, its subtle revelation of a beautiful nature, lay the charm that attracted beholders. Eugénie was still on the daisied brink of life, where illusions blossom and joys are gathered which are not known in later days. So she looked in the glass, and with no thought of love as yet in her mind, she said, "He will not give me a thought; I am too ugly!"

Then she opened her door, went out on to the landing, and bent over the staircase to hear the sounds in the house.

"He is not getting up yet," she thought. She heard Nanon's morning cough as the good woman went to and fro, swept out the dining-room, lit the kitchen fire, chained up the dog, and talked to her friends the brutes in the stable.

Eugénie fled down the staircase, and ran over to Nanon, who was milking the cow.

"Nanon," she cried, "do let us have some cream for my cousin's coffee, there's a dear."

"But, mademoiselle, you can't have cream off this morning's milk," said Nanon, as she burst out laughing. "I can't make cream for you. Your cousin is as charming as charming can be, that he is! You haven't seen him in that silk night-rail of his, all flowers and gold! I did though! The linen he wears is every bit as fine as M. le Curé's surplice."

"Nanon, make some cake for us."

"And who is to find the wood to heat the oven, and the flour and the butter?" asked Nanon, who in her capacity of Grandet's prime minister was a person of immense importance in Eugénie's eyes, and even in Eugénie's mother's. "Is *he* to be robbed to make a feast for your cousin? Ask for the butter and the flour and the firewood; he is your father, go and ask him, he may give them to *you*. There! there he is, just coming downstairs to see after the provisions——"

But Eugénie had escaped into the garden; the sound of her father's footstep on the creaking staircase terrified her. She was conscious of a happiness that shrank from the observation of others, a happiness which, as we are apt to think, and perhaps not without reason, shines from our eyes, and is written at large upon our foreheads. And not only so, she was conscious of other thoughts. The bleak discomfort of her father's house had struck her for the first time, and, with a dim feeling of vexation, the poor child wished that she could alter it all, and bring it more into harmony with her cousin's elegance. She felt a passionate longing to do something for him, without the slightest idea what that something should be. The womanly instinct awakened in her at the first sight of her cousin was only the stronger because she had reached her three-and-twentieth year, and mind and heart were fully developed; and she was so natural and simple that she acted on the promptings of her angelic nature without submitting herself, her impressions, or her feelings to any introspective process.

For the first time in her life the sight of her father struck a sort of terror into her heart; she felt that he was the master of her fate, and that she was guiltily hiding some of her thoughts from him. She began to walk hurriedly up and down, wondering how it was that the air was so fresh; there was a reviving force in the sunlight, it seemed to be within her as well as without, it was as if a new life had begun.

While she was still thinking how to gain her end concerning the cake, a quarrel came to pass between Nanon and Grandet, a thing as rare as a winter swallow. The good man had just taken his keys, and was about to dole out the provisions required for the day.

"Is there any bread left over from yesterday?" he asked of Nanon.

"Not a crumb, sir."

Grandet took up a large loaf, round in form and close in consistence, shaped in one of the flat baskets which they use for baking in Anjou, and was about to cut it, when Nanon broke in upon him with—

"There are five of us to-day, sir."

"True," answered Grandet; "but these loaves of yours weigh six pounds apiece; there will be some left over. Besides, these young fellows from Paris never touch bread, as you will soon see."

"Then do they eat *kitchen*?" asked Nanon.

This word *kitchen* in the Angevin dictionary signifies anything which is spread upon bread; from butter, the commonest variety, to preserved peaches, the most distinguished of all *kitchens*; and those who, as small children, have nibbled off the *kitchen* and left the bread, will readily understand the bearing of Nanon's remark.

"No," replied Grandet, with much gravity, "they eat neither bread nor *kitchen*; they are like a girl in love, as you may say."

Having at length cut down the day's rations to the lowest possible point, the miser was about to go to his fruit-loft, first carefully locking up the cupboards of his storeroom, when Nanon stopped him.

"Just give me some flour and butter, sir," she said, "and I will make a cake for the children."

"Are you going to turn the house upside down because my nephew is here?"

"Your nephew was no more in my mind than your dog, no more than he was in yours—— There now! you have only put out six lumps of sugar, and I want eight."

"Come, come, Nanon; I have never seen you like this before. What has come over you? Are you mistress here? You will have six lumps of sugar and no more."

"Oh, very well; and what is your nephew to sweeten his coffee with?"

"He can have two lumps; I shall go without it myself."

"*You* go without sugar! and at your age! I would sooner pay for it out of my own pocket."

"Mind your own business."

In spite of the low price of sugar, it was, in Grandet's eyes, the most precious of all colonial products. For him it was always something to be used sparingly; it was still worth six francs a pound, as in the time of the Empire, and this pet economy had become an inveterate habit with him. But every woman, no matter how simple she may be, can devise some shift to gain her ends; and Nanon allowed the question of the sugar to drop, in order to have her way about the cake.

"Mademoiselle," she called through the window, "wouldn't you like some cake?"

"No, no," answered Eugénie.

"Stay, Nanon," said Grandet as he heard his daughter's voice; "there!"

He opened the flour-bin, measured out some flour, and added a few ounces of butter to the piece which he had already cut.

"And firewood; I shall want firewood to heat the oven," said the inexorable Nanon.

"Ah! well, you can take what you want," he answered ruefully; "but you will make a fruit tart at the same time, and you must bake the dinner in the oven, that will save lighting another fire."

"Why!" cried Nanon; "there is no need to tell me that!"

Grandet gave his trusty prime minister a glance that was almost paternal.

"Mademoiselle," cried Nanon, "we are going to have a cake."

Grandet came back again with the fruit, and began by setting down a plateful on the kitchen table.

"Just look here, sir," said Nanon, "what lovely boots your nephew has! What leather, how nice it smells! What are they to be cleaned with? Am I to put your egg blacking on them?"

"No, Nanon," said Eugénie; "I expect the egg would spoil the leather. You had better tell him that you have no idea how to clean black morocco—— Yes, it is morocco, and he himself will buy you something in Saumur to clean his boots with. I have heard it said that they put sugar into their blacking, and that is what makes it so shiny."

"Then is it good to eat?" asked Nanon, as she picked up the boots and smelt them. "Why, why! they smell of madame's eau-de-Cologne! Oh, how funny!"

"*Funny!*" said her master; "people spend more money on their boots than they are worth that stand in them, and you think it funny!" He had just returned from a second and final expedition to the fruit-loft, carefully locking the door after him.

"You will have soup once or twice a week while your nephew is here, sir, will you not?"

"Yes."

"Shall I go round to the butcher's?"

"You will do nothing of the kind. You can make some chicken-broth; the tenants will keep you going. But I shall tell Cornoiller to kill some ravens for me. That kind of game makes the best broth in the world."

"Is it true, sir, that they live on dead things?"

"You are a fool, Nanon! They live, like everybody else, on anything that they can pick up. Don't we all live on dead things? What about legacies?" And the good man

Grandet, having no further order to give, drew out his watch, and finding that there was yet half an hour to spare before breakfast, took up his hat, gave his daughter a kiss, and said, "Would you like to take a walk along the Loire? I have something to see after in the meadows down there."

Eugénie put on her straw hat lined with rose-colored silk; and then father and daughter went down the crooked street towards the market-place.

"Where are you off to so early this morning?" said the notary Cruchot, as he met the Grandets.

"We are going to take a look at something," responded his friend, in nowise deceived by this early move on the notary's part.

Whenever Grandet was about to "take a look at something," the notary knew by experience that there was something to be gained by going with him. With him, therefore, he went.

"Come along, Cruchot," said Grandet, addressing the notary. "You are one of my friends; I am going to show you what a piece of folly it is to plant poplars in good soil——"

"Then the sixty thousand francs that you fingered for those poplars of yours in the meadows by the Loire are a mere trifle to you?" said Cruchot, opening his eyes wide in his bewilderment. "And such luck as you had too!—— Felling your timber just when there was no white wood to be had in Nantes, so that every trunk fetched thirty francs!"

Eugénie heard and did not hear, utterly unconscious that the most critical moment of her life was rapidly approaching, that a paternal and sovereign decree was about to be pronounced, and that the old notary was to bring all this about. Grandet had reached the magnificent meadowland by the Loire, which had come into his hands in his Republican days. Some thirty laborers were busy digging out the roots of the poplars that once stood there, filling up the holes that were left, and leveling the ground.

"Now, M. Cruchot, see how much space a poplar takes

up," said he, addressing the notary. "Jean," he called to a workman, "m—m—measure r—round the sides with your rule."

"Eight feet four times over," said the workman when he had finished.

"Thirty-two feet of loss," said Grandet to Cruchot. "Now along that line there were three hundred poplars, weren't there? Well, then, three hundred t—t—times thirty-two f—feet will eat up five hundredweight of hay, allow twice as much again for the space on either side, and you get fifteen hundredweight; then there is the intervening space—say a thousand t—t—trusses of hay altogether."

"Well," said Cruchot, helping his friend out, "and a thousand trusses of that hay would fetch something like six hundred francs."

"S—s—say t—twelve hundred, because the s—second crop is worth three or four hundred francs. Good, then reckon up what t—t—twelve hundred francs per annum d—d—during f—forty years comes to, at compound interest, of course."

"Sixty thousand francs, or thereabouts," said the notary.

"That is what I make it! Sixty thousand f—f—francs. Well," the vine-grower went on without stammering, "two thousand poplars will not bring in fifty thousand francs in forty years. So you lose on them. That I found out," said Grandet, who was vastly pleased with himself. "Jean," he continued, turning to the laborer, "fill up all the holes except those along the riverside, where you can plant those poplar saplings that I bought. If you set them along by the Loire, they will grow there finely at the expense of the Government," he added, and as he looked round at Cruchot the wen on his nose twitched slightly, the most sardonic smile could not have said more.

"Yes, it is clear enough, poplars should only be planted in poor soil," said Cruchot, quite overcome with amazement at Grandet's astuteness.

"Y—e—s, sir," said the cooper ironically.

Eugénie was looking out over the glorious landscape and along the Loire, without heeding her father's arithmetic;

but Cruchot's talk with his client took another turn, and her attention was suddenly aroused.

"So you have a son-in-law come from Paris; they are talking about nothing but your nephew in all Saumur. I shall soon have settlements to draw up; eh, Père Grandet?"

"Did you come out early to t—t—tell me that?" inquired Grandet, and again the wen twitched. "Very well, you are an old crony of mine; I will be—plain with you, and t—t—tell you what you w—want to know. I would rather fling my d—d—daughter into the Loire, look you, than g—give her to her cousin. You can give that out. But, no; l—l—let people gossip."

Everything swam before Eugénie's eyes. Her vague hopes of distant happiness had suddenly taken definite shape, had sprung up and blossomed, and then her harvest of flowers had been as suddenly cut down and lay on the earth. Since yesterday she had woven the bonds of happiness that unite two souls, and henceforward sorrow, it seemed, was to strengthen them. Is it not written in the noble destiny of woman that the grandeur of sorrow should touch her more closely than all the pomp and splendor of fortune?

How came it that a father's feelings had been extinguished (as it seemed) in her father's heart? What crime could be laid at Charles's door? Mysterious questions! Mysterious and sad forebodings already surrounded her growing love, that mystery within her soul. When they turned to go home again, she trembled in every limb; and as they went up the shady street, along which she had lately gone so joyously, the shadows looked gloomy, the air she breathed seemed full of the melancholy of autumn, everything about her was sad. Love, that had brought these keener perceptions, was quick to interpret every boding sign. As they neared home, she walked on ahead of her father, knocked at the house-door, and stood waiting beside it. But Grandet, seeing that the notary carried a newspaper still in its wrapper, asked, "How are consols?"

"I know you will not take my advice, Grandet," Cruchot replied. "You should buy at once; the chance of making twenty per cent. on them in two years is still open to you,

and they pay a very fair rate of interest besides; five thousand livres is not a bad return on eighty thousand francs. You can buy now at eighty francs fifty centimes."

"We shall see," remarked Grandet pensively, rubbing his chin.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the notary, who by this time had unfolded his newspaper.

"Well, what is it?" cried Grandet as Cruchot put the paper in his hands and said—

"Read that paragraph."

"M. Grandet, one of the most highly-respected merchants in Paris, shot himself through the head yesterday afternoon, after putting in an appearance on 'Change as usual. He had previously sent in his resignation to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, resigning his position as Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce at the same time. His affairs had become involved through the failures of his stockbroker and notary, MM. Roguin and Souchet. M. Grandet, whose character was greatly esteemed, and whose credit stood high, would no doubt have found temporary assistance on the market which would have enabled him to tide over his difficulties. It is to be regretted that a man of such high character should have given way to the first impulse of despair"—and so forth, and so forth.

"I knew it," the old vine-grower said.

Phlegmatic though Cruchot was, he felt a horrible shudder run through him at the words; perhaps Grandet of Paris had stretched imploring hands in vain to the millions of Grandet of Saumur; the blood ran cold in his veins.

"And his son?" he asked presently, "he was in such spirits yesterday evening."

"His son knows nothing as yet," Grandet answered, imperturbable as ever.

"Good-morning, M. Grandet," said Cruchot. He understood the position now, and went to reassure the President de Bonfons.

Grandet found breakfast ready. Mme. Grandet was al-

ready seated in her chair, mounted on the wooden blocks, and was knitting woolen cuffs for the winter. Eugénie ran to her mother and put her arms about her, with the eager hunger for affection that comes of a hidden trouble.

"You can get your breakfast," said Nanon, bustling downstairs in a hurry; "he is sleeping like a cherub. He looks so nice with his eyes shut! I went in and called him, but it was all one, he never heard me."

"Let him sleep," said Grandet; "he will wake soon enough to hear bad news, in any case."

"What is the matter?" asked Eugénie. She was putting into her cup the two smallest lumps of sugar, weighing goodness knows how many grains; her worthy parent was wont to amuse himself by cutting up sugar whenever he had nothing better to do.

Mme. Grandet, who had not dared to put the question herself, looked at her husband.

"His father has blown his brains out."

"*My uncle?*" said Eugénie.

"Oh! that poor boy!" cried Mme. Grandet.

"Poor indeed!" said Grandet; "he has not a penny."

"Ah! well, he is sleeping as if he were the king of all the world," said Nanon pityingly.

Eugénie could not eat. Her heart was wrung as a woman's heart can be when for the first time her whole soul is filled with sorrow and compassion for the sorrow of one she loves. She burst into tears.

"You did not know your uncle, so what is there to cry about?" said her father with a glance like a hungry tiger; just such a glance as he would give, no doubt, to his heaps of gold.

"But who wouldn't feel sorry for the poor young man, sir?" said the serving-maid; "sleeping there like a log, and knowing nothing of his fate."

"I did not speak to you, Nanon! Hold your tongue."

In that moment Eugénie learned that a woman who loves must dissemble her feelings. She was silent.

"Until I come back, Mme. Grandet, you will say nothing about this to him, I hope," the old cooper continued. "They

are making a ditch in my meadows along the road, and I must go and see after it. I shall come back for the second breakfast at noon, and then my nephew and I will have a talk about his affairs. As for you, Mlle. Eugénie, if you are crying over that popinjay, let us have no more of it, child. He will be off post-haste to the Indies directly, and you will never set eyes on *him* any more."

Her father took up his gloves, which were lying on the rim of his hat, put them on in his cool, deliberate way, inserting the fingers of one hand between those of the other, dovetail fashion, so as to thrust them down well into the tips of the gloves, and then he went out.

"Oh! mamma, I can scarcely breathe!" cried Eugénie, when she was alone with her mother; "I have never suffered like this!"

Mme. Grandet, seeing her daughter's white face, opened the window and let fresh air into the room.

"I feel better now," said Eugénie after a little while.

This nervous excitement in one who was usually so quiet and self-possessed produced an effect on Mme. Grandet. She looked at her daughter, and her mother's love and sympathetic instinct told her everything. But, in truth, the celebrated Hungarian twin-sisters, united to each other by one of nature's errors, could scarcely have lived in closer sympathy than Eugénie and her mother. Were they not always together: together in the window where they sat the live-long day, together at church; did they not breathe the same air even when they slept?

"My poor little girl!" said Mme. Grandet, drawing Eugénie's head down till it rested upon her bosom.

Her daughter lifted her face, and gave her mother a questioning look which seemed to read her inmost thoughts.

"Why must he be sent to the Indies?" said the girl. "If he is in trouble, ought he not to stay here with us? Is he not our nearest relation?"

"Yes, dear child, that would only be natural; but your father has reasons for what he does, and we must respect them."

Mother and daughter sat in silence; the one on her chair

mounted on the wooden blocks, the other in her little arm-chair. Both women took up their needlework. Eugénie felt that her mother understood her, and her heart was full of gratitude for such tender sympathy.

"How kind you are, dear mamma!" she said as she took her mother's hand and kissed it.

The worn, patient face, aged with many sorrows, lighted up at the words.

"Do you like him?" asked Eugénie.

For all answer, Mme. Grandet smiled. Then after a moment's pause she murmured, "You cannot surely love him already? That would be a pity."

"Why would it be a pity?" asked Eugénie. "You like him, Nanon likes him, why should I not like him too? Now then, mamma, let us set the table for his breakfast."

She threw down her work, and her mother followed her example, saying as she did so, "You are a mad girl!"

But none the less did she sanction her daughter's freak by assisting in it.

Eugénie called Nanon.

"Haven't you all you want yet, mamselle?"

"Nanon, surely you will have some cream by twelve o'clock?"

"By twelve o'clock? Oh! yes," answered the old servant.

"Very well, then, let the coffee be very strong. I have heard M. des Grassins say that they drink their coffee very strong in Paris. Put in plenty."

"And where is it to come from?"

"You must buy some."

"And suppose the master meets me?"

"He is down by the river."

"I will just slip out then. But M. Fessard asked me when I went about the candle if the Three Holy Kings were paying us a visit. Our goings-on will be all over the town."

"Your father would be quite capable of beating us," said Mme. Grandet, "if he suspected anything of all this."

"Oh! well, then, never mind; he will beat us, we will take the beating on our knees."

At this Mme. Grandet raised her eyes to heaven, and said

no more. Nanon put on her sun-bonnet and went out. Eugénie spread a clean linen tablecloth, then she went upstairs in quest of some bunches of grapes which she had amused herself by hanging from some strings up in the attic. She tripped lightly along the corridor, so as not to disturb her cousin, and could not resist the temptation to stop a moment before the door to listen to his even breathing.

"Trouble wakes while he is sleeping," she said to herself.

She arranged her grapes on the few last green vine-leaves as daintily as any experienced *chef d'office*, and set them on the table in triumph. She levied contributions on the pears which her father had counted out, and piled them up pyramid-fashion, with autumn leaves among them. She came and went, and danced in and out. She might have ransacked the house; the will was in nowise lacking, but her father kept everything under lock and key, and the keys were in his pocket. Nanon came back with two new-laid eggs. Eugénie could have flung her arms round the girl's neck.

"The farmer from La Lande had eggs in his basket; I asked him for some, and to please me he let me have these, the nice man."

After two hours of industrious application, Eugénie succeeded in preparing a very simple meal; it cost but little, it is true, but it was a terrible infringement of the immemorial laws and customs of the house. No one sat down to the midday meal, which consisted of a little bread, some fruit or butter, and a glass of wine. Twenty times in those two hours Eugénie had left her work to watch the coffee boil, or to listen for any sound announcing that her cousin was getting up; now looking round on the table drawn up to the fire, with one of the armchairs set beside it for her cousin, on the two plates of fruit, the egg-cups, the bottle of white wine, the bread, and the little pyramid of white sugar in a saucer; Eugénie trembled from head to foot at the mere thought of the glance her father would give her if he should happen to come in at that moment. Often, therefore, did she look at the clock, to see if there was yet

time for her cousin to finish his breakfast before her parent's return.

"Never mind, Eugénie, if your father comes in, I will take all the blame," said Mme. Grandet.

Eugénie could not keep back the tears. "Oh! my kind mother," she cried; "I have not loved you enough!"

Charles, after making innumerable pirouettes round his room, came down at last, singing gay little snatches of song. Luckily it was only eleven o'clock after all. He had taken as much pains with his appearance (the Parisian!) as if he had been staying in the château belonging to the high-born fair one who was traveling in Scotland; and now he came in with that gracious air of condescension which sits not ill on youth, and which gave Eugénie a melancholy pleasure. He had come to regard the collapse of his castles in Anjou as a very good joke, and went up to his aunt quite gayly.

"I hope you slept well, dear aunt? And you too, cousin?"

"Very well, sir; how did you sleep?"

"Soundly."

"Cousin, you must be hungry," said Eugénie; "sit down."

"Oh! I never breakfast before twelve o'clock, just after I rise. But I have fared so badly on my journey, that I will yield to persuasion. Besides——" he drew out the daintiest little watch that ever issued from Bréguet's workshop. "Dear me, it is only eleven o'clock; I have been up betimes."

"Up betimes?" asked Mme. Grandet.

"Yes, but I wanted to set my things straight. Well, I am quite ready for something, something not very substantial, a fowl or a partridge."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Nanon, hearing these words.

"A partridge," said Eugénie to herself. She would willingly have given all she had for one.

"Come and take your seat," said Mme. Grandet, addressing her nephew.

The dandy sank into the armchair in a graceful attitude, much as a pretty woman might recline on her sofa. Eugénie

and her mother drew their chairs to the fire and sat near him.

"Do you always live here?" Charles inquired, thinking that the room looked even more hideous by daylight than by candlelight.

"Always," Eugénie answered, watching him as she spoke. "Always, except during the vintage. Then we go to help Nanon, and we all stay at the Abbey at Noyers."

"Do you ever take a walk?"

"Sometimes, on Sundays after vespers, when it is fine, we walk down as far as the bridge," said Mme. Grandet, "or we sometimes go to see them cutting the hay."

"Have you a theater here?"

"Go to the play!" cried Mme. Grandet; "go to see play-actors! Why, sir, do you not know that that is a mortal sin?"

"There, sir," said Nanon, bringing in the eggs, "we will give you chickens in the shell."

"Oh! new-laid eggs," said Charles, who, after the manner of those accustomed to luxury, had quite forgotten all about his partridge. "Delicious! Do you happen to have any butter, eh, my good girl?"

"Butter? If you have butter now, you will have no cake by-and-by," said Nanon.

"Yes, of course, Nanon; bring some butter," cried Eugénie.

The young girl watched her cousin while he cut his bread and butter into strips and felt happy. The most romantic shopgirl in Paris could not more thoroughly enjoy the spectacle of innocence triumphant in a melodrama. It must be conceded that Charles, who had been brought up by a graceful and charming mother, and had received his "finishing education" from an accomplished woman of the world, was as dainty, neat, and elegant in his ways as any coxcomb of the gentler sex. The girl's quiet sympathy produced an almost magnetic effect. Charles, finding himself thus waited upon by his cousin and aunt, could not resist the influence of their overflowing kindness. He was radiant with good-humor, and the look he gave Eugénie was almost a smile.

As he looked more closely at her he noticed her pure, regular features, her unconscious attitude, the wonderful clearness of her eyes, in which love sparkled, though she as yet knew nothing of love but its pain and a wistful longing.

"Really, my dear cousin," he said, "if you were in a box at the opera and in evening dress, and I would answer for it, my aunt's remark about deadly sin would be fully justified, all the men would become envious and all the women jealous."

Eugénie's heart beat fast with joy at this compliment, though it conveyed no meaning whatever to her mind.

"You are laughing at a poor little country cousin," she said.

"If you knew me better, cousin, you would know that I detest banter; it sears the heart and deadens the feelings." And he swallowed down a strip of bread and butter with perfect satisfaction.

"No," he continued, "I never make fun of others, very likely because I have not wit enough, a defect which puts me at a great disadvantage. They have a deadly trick in Paris of saying, 'He is *so* good-natured,' which, being interpreted, means—'the poor youth is as stupid as a rhinoceros.' But as I happen to be rich, and it is known that I can hit the bull's-eye straight off at thirty paces with any kind of pistol anywhere, these witticisms are not leveled at me."

"It is evident from what you say, nephew," said Mme. Grandet gravely, "that you have a kind heart."

"That is a very pretty ring of yours," said Eugénie; "is there any harm in asking to see it?"

Charles took off the ring and held it out; Eugénie reddened as her cousin's rose-pink nails came in contact with her finger-tips.

"Mother, only see how fine the work is!"

"Oh, what a lot of gold there is in it," said Nanon, who brought in the coffee.

"What is that?" asked Charles, laughing, as he pointed to an oval pipkin, made of glazed brown earthenware, ornamented without-by a circular fringe of ashes. It was full

of a brown boiling liquid, in which coffee grounds were visible as they rose to the surface and fell again.

"Coffee; boiling hot!" answered Nanon.

"Oh! my dear aunt, I must at least leave some beneficent trace of my stay here. You are a long way behind the times! I will show you how to make decent coffee in a Chaptal coffee-pot." Forthwith he endeavored to explain the principles on which this utensil is constructed, and how the coffee should be prepared.

"Bless me! if there is all that to-do about it," said Nanon, "you would have to give your whole time to it. I'll never make coffee that way, I know. Who is to cut the grass for our cow while I am looking after the coffee-pot?"

"I would do it," said Eugénie.

"*Child!*" said Mme. Grandet, with a look at her daughter; and at the word came a swift recollection of the misery about to overwhelm the unconscious young man, and the three women were suddenly silent, and gazed pityingly at him. He could not understand it.

"What is it, cousin?" he asked Eugénie.

"Hush!" said Mme. Grandet, seeing that the girl was about to reply. "You know that your father means to speak to the gentleman——"

"Say 'Charles,'" said young Grandet.

"Oh, is your name Charles?" said Eugénie. "It is a nice name."

Evil forebodings are seldom vain.

Just at that moment Mme. Grandet, Eugénie, and Nanon, who could not think of the cooper's return without shuddering, heard the familiar knock at the door.

"That is papa!" cried Eugénie.

She took away the saucer full of sugar, leaving one or two lumps on the tablecloth. Nanon hurried away with the egg-cups. Mme. Grandet started up like a frightened fawn. There was a sudden panic of terror, which amazed Charles, who was quite at a loss to account for it.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked.

"My father is coming in," explained Eugénie.

"Well, and what then?"

M. Grandet entered the room, gave one sharp glance at the table, and another at Charles. He saw how it was at once.

"Aha! you are making a fête for your nephew. Good, very good, oh! very good, indeed!" he said, without stammering. "When the cat is away, the mice may play."

"Fête?" thought Charles, who had not the remotest conception of the state of affairs in the Grandet household.

"Bring me my glass, Nanon," said the good man.

Eugénie went for the glass. Grandet drew from his waistcoat pocket a large clasp-knife with a stag's-horn handle, cut a slice of bread, buttered it slowly and sparingly, and began to eat as he stood. Just then Charles put some sugar into his coffee; this called Grandet's attention to the pieces of sugar on the table; he looked hard at his wife, who turned pale, and came a step or two towards him; he bent down and said in the poor woman's ear—

"Where did all that sugar come from?"

"Nanon went out to Fessard's for some; there was none in the house."

It is impossible to describe the painful interest that this dumb show possessed for the three women; Nanon had left her kitchen, and was looking into the dining-room to see how things went there. Charles meanwhile tasted his coffee, found it rather strong, and looked round for another piece of sugar, but Grandet had already pounced upon it and taken it away.

"What do you want, nephew?" the old man inquired.

"The sugar."

"Pour in some more milk if your coffee is too strong," answered the master of the house.

Eugénie took up the saucer, of which Grandet had previously taken possession, and set it on the table, looking quietly at her father the while. Truly, the fair Parisian who exerts all the strength of her weak arms to help her lover to escape by a ladder of silken cords, displays less courage than Eugénie showed when she put the sugar upon the table. The Parisian will have her reward. She will proudly exhibit the bruises on a round white arm, her lover

will bathe them with tears and cover them with kisses, and pain will be extinguished in bliss; but Charles had not the remotest conception of what his cousin endured for him, or of the horrible dismay that filled her heart as she met her father's angry eyes; he would never even know of her sacrifice.

"You are eating nothing, wife!"

The poor bond-slave went to the table, cut a piece of bread in fear and trembling, and took a pear. Eugénie, grown reckless, offered the grapes to her father, saying as she did so—

"Just try some of my fruit, papa! You will take some, will you not, cousin? I brought those pretty grapes down on purpose for you."

"Oh! if they could have their way, they would turn Saumur upside down for you, nephew! As soon as you have finished we will take a turn in the garden together; I have some things to tell you that would take a deal of sugar to sweeten them."

Eugénie and her mother both gave Charles a look, which the young man could not mistake.

"What do you mean by that, uncle? Since my mother died——" (here his voice softened a little) "there is no misfortune possible for me——"

"Who can know what afflictions God may send to make trial of us, nephew?" said his aunt.

"Tut, tut, tut," muttered Grandet, "here you are beginning with your folly already! I am sorry to see that you have such white hands, nephew."

He displayed the fists, like shoulders of mutton, with which nature had terminated his own arms.

"That is the sort of hand to rake the crowns together! You put the kind of leather on your feet that we used to make pocket-books of to keep bills in. That is the way you have been brought up. That's bad! that's bad!"

"What do you mean, uncle? I'll be hanged if I understand one word of this."

"Come along," said Grandet.

The miser shut his knife with a snap, drained his glass, and opened the door.

“Oh! keep up your courage, cousin!”

Something in the girl's voice sent a sudden chill through Charles; he followed his formidable relative with dreadful misgivings. Eugénie and her mother and Nanon went into the kitchen; an uncontrollable anxiety led them to watch the two actors in the scene which was about to take place in the damp little garden.

Uncle and nephew walked together in silence at first. Grandet felt the situation to be a somewhat awkward one; not that he shrank at all from telling Charles of his father's death, but he felt a kind of pity for a young man left in this way without a penny in the world, and he cast about for phrases that should break this cruel news as gently as might be. “You have lost your father!” he could say that; there was nothing in that; fathers usually predecease their children. But, “You have not a penny!” All the woes of the world were summed up in those words, so for the third time the worthy man walked the whole length of the path in the center of the garden, crunching the gravel beneath his heavy boots, and no word was said.

At all great crises in our lives, any sudden joy or great sorrow, there comes a vivid consciousness of our surroundings that stamps them on the memory forever; and Charles, with every faculty strained and intent, saw the box-edging to the borders, the falling autumn leaves, the moldering walls, the gnarled and twisted boughs of the fruit-trees, and till his dying day every picturesque detail of the little garden came back with the memory of the supreme hour of that early sorrow.

“It is very fine, very warm,” said Grandet, drawing in a deep breath of air.

“Yes, uncle, but why——”

“Well, my boy,” his uncle resumed, “I have some bad news for you. Your father is very ill——”

“What am I doing here?” cried Charles. “Nanon!” he shouted, “order post-horses! I shall be sure to find a carriage of some sort in the place, I suppose,” he added,

turning to his uncle, who had not stirred from where he stood.

"Horses and carriage are of no use," Grandet answered, looking at Charles, who immediately stared straight before him in silence. "Yes, my poor boy, you guess what has happened; he is dead. But that is nothing; there is something worse; he has shot himself through the head——"

"My father?"

"Yes, but that is nothing either. The newspapers are discussing it, as if it were any business of theirs. There, read for yourself."

Grandet had borrowed Cruchot's paper, and now he laid the fatal paragraph before Charles. The poor young fellow—he was only a lad as yet—made no attempt to hide his emotion, and burst into tears.

"Come, that is better," said Grandet to himself. "That look in his eyes frightened me. He is crying; he will pull through. Never mind, my poor nephew," Grandet resumed aloud, not knowing whether Charles heard him or no, "that is nothing, you will get over it, but——"

"Never! never! My father! my father!"

"He has ruined you; you are penniless."

"What is that to me. Where is my father?—my father!" The sound of his sobbing filled the little garden, reverberated in ghastly echoes from the walls. Tears are as infectious as laughter; the three women wept with pity for him. Charles broke from his uncle without waiting to hear more, and sprang into the yard, found the staircase, and fled to his own room, where he flung himself across the bed and buried his face in the bedclothes, that he might give way to his grief in solitude as far as possible from these relations.

"Let him alone till the first shower is over," said Grandet, going back to the parlor. Eugénie and her mother had hastily returned to their places, had dried their eyes, and were sewing with cold trembling fingers.

"But that fellow is good for nothing," went on Grandet; "he is so taken up with dead folk that he doesn't even think about the money."

Eugénie shuddered to hear the most sacred of sorrows spoken of in such a way; from that moment she began to criticise her father. Charles's sobs, smothered though they were, rang through that house of echoes; the sounds seemed to come from under the earth, a heartrending wail that grew fainter towards the end of the day, and only ceased as night drew on.

"Poor boy!" said Mme. Grandet.

It was an unfortunate remark! M. Grandet looked at his wife, then at Eugénie, then at the sugar basin; he recollected the sumptuous breakfast prepared that morning for their unhappy kinsman, and planted himself in the middle of the room.

"Oh! by-the-by," he said, in his usual cool, deliberate way, "I hope you will not carry your extravagance any farther, Mme. Grandet; I do not give you MY money for you to squander it on sugar for that young rogue."

"Mother had nothing whatever to do with it," said Eugénie. "It was I——"

"Because you are come of age," Grandet interrupted his daughter, "you think you can set yourself to thwart me, I suppose. Mind what you are about, Eugénie——"

"But, father, your own brother's son ought not to have to go without sugar in your house."

"Tut, tut, tut, tut!" came from the cooper in a cadence of four semitones. "'Tis 'my nephew' here, and 'my brother's son' there; Charles is nothing to us; he has not a brass farthing. His father is a bankrupt, and when the young sprig has cried as much as he wishes, he shall clear out of this; I will not have my house turned topsy-turvy for him."

"What is a bankrupt, father?" asked Eugénie.

"A bankrupt," replied her father, "is guilty of the most dishonorable action that can dishonor a man."

"It must be a very great sin," said Mme. Grandet, "and our brother will perhaps be eternally lost."

"There you are with your preachments," her husband retorted, shrugging his shoulders. "A bankrupt, Eugénie," her father continued, "is a thief whom the law unfortunately

takes under its protection. People trusted Guillaume Grandet with their goods, confiding in his character for fair-dealing and honesty; he has taken all they have, and left them nothing but the eyes in their heads to cry over their losses with. A bankrupt is worse than a highwayman; a highwayman sets upon you, and you have a chance to defend yourself; he risks his life besides, while the other—Charles is disgraced, in fact.”

The words filled the poor girl’s heart; they weighed upon her with all their weight; she herself was so scrupulously conscientious; no flower in the depths of a forest had grown more delicately free from spot or stain; she knew none of the maxims of worldly wisdom, and nothing of its quibbles and its sophistries. So she accepted her father’s cruel definition and sweeping statements as to bankrupts; he drew no distinction between a fraudulent bankruptcy and a failure from unavoidable causes, and how should she?

“But, father, could you not have prevented this misfortune?”

“My brother did not ask my advice; besides, his liabilities amount to four millions.”

“How much is a million, father?” asked Eugénie, with the simplicity of a child who would fain have its wish fulfilled at once.

“A million?” queried Grandet. “Why, it is a million francs, two hundred thousand five-franc pieces; there are twenty sous in a franc, and it takes five francs of twenty sous each to make a five-franc piece.”

“*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*” cried Eugénie, “how came my uncle to have four millions of his own? Is there really anybody in France who has so many millions as that?”

Grandet stroked his daughter’s chin and smiled. The wen seemed to grow larger.

“What will become of cousin Charles?”

“He will set out for the East Indies, and try to make a fortune. That is his father’s wish.”

“But has he any money to go with?”

“I shall pay his passage out as far as—yes—as far as Nantes.”

Eugénie sprang up and flung her arms about her father's neck.

"Oh! father," she said, "you are good!"

Her warm embrace embarrassed Grandet somewhat, perhaps, too, his conscience was not quite at ease.

"Does it take a long while to make a million?" she asked.

"Lord! yes," said the cooper; "you know what a napoleon is; well, then, it takes fifty thousand of them to make a million."

"Mamma, we will have a novena said for him."

"That was what I was thinking," her mother replied.

"Just like you! always thinking how to spend money. Really, one might suppose that we had any amount of money to throw away!"

As he spoke, a sound of low, hoarse sobbing, more ominous than any which had preceded it, came from the garret. Eugénie and her mother shuddered.

"Nanon," called Grandet, "go up and see that he is not killing himself."

"Look here! you two," he continued, turning to his wife and daughter, whose cheeks grew white at his tones, "there is to be no nonsense, mind! I am leaving the house. I am going round to see the Dutchmen who are going to-day. Then I shall go to Cruchot and have a talk with him about all this."

He went out. As soon as the door closed upon Grandet, Eugénie and her mother breathed more freely. The girl had never felt constraint in her father's presence until that morning; but a few hours had wrought rapid changes in her ideas and feelings.

"Mamma, how many louis is a hogshead of wine worth?"

"Your father gets something between a hundred and a hundred and fifty francs for his; sometimes two hundred, I believe, from what I have heard him say."

"And would there be fourteen hundred hogsheads in a vintage?"

"I don't know how many there are, child, upon my word; your father never talks about business to me."

"But, anyhow, papa must be rich."

"May be. But M. Cruchot told me that your father bought Froidfond two years ago. That would be a heavy pull on him."

Eugénie, now at a loss as to her father's wealth, went no farther with her arithmetic.

"He did not even so much as see me, the poor dear!" said Nanon on her return. "He is lying there on his bed like a calf, crying like a Magdalen; you never saw the like! Poor young man, what can be the matter with him?"

"Let us go up at once and comfort him, mamma; if we hear a knock, we will come downstairs."

There was something in the musical tones of her daughter's voice which Mme. Grandet could not resist. Eugénie was sublime; she was a girl no longer, she was a woman. With beating hearts they climbed the stairs and went together to Charles's room. The door was open. The young man saw nothing, and heard nothing; he was absorbed in his grief, an inarticulate cry broke from him now and again.

"How he loves his father!" said Eugénie in a low voice, and in her tone there was an unmistakable accent which betrayed the passion in her heart, and hopes of which she herself was unaware. Mme. Grandet, with the quick instinct of a mother's love, glanced at her daughter and spoke in a low voice in her ear.

"Take care," she said, "or you may love him."

"Love him!" said Eugénie. "Ah! if you only knew what my father said."

Charles moved slightly as he lay, and saw his aunt and cousin.

"I have lost my father," he cried; "my poor father! If he had only trusted me and told me about his losses, we might have worked together to repair them. *Mon Dieu!* my kind father! I was so sure that I should see him again, and I said good-by so carelessly, I am afraid, never thinking——"

His words were interrupted by sobs.

"We will surely pray for him," said Mme. Grandet. "Submit yourself to the will of God."

"Take courage, cousin," said Eugénie gently; "nothing can give your father back to you; you must now think how to save your honor——"

A woman always has her wits about her, even in her capacity of comforter, and with instinctive tact Eugénie sought to divert her cousin's mind from his sorrow by leading him to think about himself.

"My honor?" cried the young man, hastily pushing back the hair from his eyes. He sat upright upon the bed, and folded his arms. "Ah! true. My uncle said that my father had failed."

He hid his face in his hands with a heartrending cry of pain.

"Leave me! leave me! cousin Eugénie," he entreated. "Oh! God, forgive my father, for he must have been terribly unhappy!"

There was something in the sight of this young sorrow, this utter abandonment of grief, that was horribly engaging. It was a sorrow that shrank from the gaze of others, and Charles's gesture of entreaty that they should leave him to himself was understood by Eugénie and her mother. They went silently downstairs again, took their places by the great window, and sewed on for nearly an hour without a word to each other.

Eugénie had looked round the room; it was a stolen glance. In one of those hasty surveys by which a girl sees everything in a moment, she had noticed the pretty trifles on the toilet-table—the scissors, the razors mounted with gold. The gleams of splendor and luxury, seen amidst all this misery, made Charles still more interesting in her eyes, perhaps by the very force of the contrast. Their life had been so lonely and so quiet; such an event as this, with its painful interest, had never broken the monotony of their lives, little had occurred to stir their imagination, and now this tragical drama was being enacted under their eyes.

"Mamma," said Eugénie, "shall we wear mourning?"

"Your father will decide that," replied Mme. Grandet, and once more they sewed in silence. Eugénie's needle moved with a mechanical regularity, which betrayed her preoccupation of mind. The first wish of this adorable girl was to share her cousin's mourning. About four o'clock a sharp knock at the door sent a sudden thrill of terror through Mme. Grandet.

"What can have brought your father back?" she said to her daughter.

The vine-grower came in in high good-humor. He rubbed his hands so energetically that nothing but a skin like leather could have borne it, and indeed his hands were tanned like Russia leather, though the fragrant pine-rosin and incense had been omitted in the process. For a time he walked up and down and looked at the weather, but at last his secret escaped him.

"I have hooked them, wife," he said, without stammering; "I have them safe. Our wine is sold! The Dutchmen and Belgians were setting out this morning; I hung about in the market-place in front of their inn, looking as simple as I could. What's-his-name—you know the man—came up to me. All the best growers are hanging off and holding their vintages; they wanted to wait, and so they can, I have not hindered them. Our Belgian was at his wits' end, I saw that. So the bargain was struck; he is taking the whole of our vintage at two hundred francs the hogshead, half of it paid down at once in gold, and I have promissory notes for the rest. There are six louis for you. In three months' time prices will go down."

The last words came out quietly enough, but there was something so sardonic in the tone that if the little knots of growers, then standing in the twilight in the market-place of Saumur, in dismay at the news of Grandet's sale, had heard him speak, they would have shuddered; there would have been a panic on the market—wines would have fallen fifty per cent.

"You have a thousand hogsheads this year, father, have you not?" asked Eugénie.

"Yes, little girl."

These words indicated that the cooper's joy had indeed reached high-water mark.

"That will mean two hundred thousand francs?"

"Yes, Mlle. Grandet."

"Well, then, father, you can easily help Charles."

The surprise, the wrath, and bewilderment with which Balshazzar beheld *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, written upon his palace wall were as nothing compared with Grandet's cold fury; he had forgotten all about Charles, and now he found that all his daughter's inmost thoughts were of his nephew, and that this arithmetic of hers referred to him. It was exasperating.

"Look here!" he thundered; "ever since that scapegrace set foot in *my* house everything has gone askew. You take it upon yourselves to buy sugar-plums, and make a great set-out for him. I will not have these doings. I should think, at my age, I ought to know what is right and proper to do. At any rate, I have no need to take lessons from my daughter, nor from anyone else. I shall do for my nephew whatever it is right and proper for me to do; it is no business of yours, you need not meddle in it. And now, as for you, Eugénie," he added, turning towards her, "if you say another word about it, I will send you and Nanon off to the Abbey at Noyers, see if I don't. Where is that boy? has he come downstairs yet?"

"No, dear," answered Mme. Grandet.

"Why, what is he doing then?"

"He is crying for his father," Eugénie said.

Grandet looked at his daughter, and found nothing to say. There was some touch of the father even in him. He took one or two turns up and down, and then went straight to his strong-room to think over possible investments. He had thoughts of buying consols. Those two thousand acres of woodland had brought him in six hundred thousand francs; then there was the money from the sale of the poplars, there was last year's income from various sources, and this year's savings, to say nothing of the bargain which he had just concluded; so that, leaving those two hundred thousand francs out of the question, he possessed a lump

sum of nine hundred thousand livres. That twenty per cent., to be made in so short a time upon his outlay, tempted him. Consols stood at seventy. He jotted down his calculations on the margin of the paper that had brought the news of his brother's death; the moans of his nephew sounded in his ears the while, but he did not hear them; he went on with his work until Nanon thumped vigorously on the thick wall to summon her master to dinner. On the last step of the staircase beneath the archway, Grandet paused and thought.

"There is the interest beside the eight per cent.—I will do it. Fifteen hundred thousand francs in two years' time, in gold from Paris too, full weight.—Well, what has become of my nephew?"

"He said he did not want anything," replied Nanon. "He ought to eat, or he will fall ill."

"It is so much saved," was her master's comment.

"Lord! yes," she replied.

"Pooh! he will not keep on crying forever. Hunger drives the wolf from the woods."

Dinner was a strangely silent meal. When the cloth had been removed, Mme. Grandet spoke to her husband—

"We ought to go into mourning, dear."

"Really, Mme. Grandet, you must be hard up for ways of getting rid of money. Mourning is in the heart; it is not put on with clothes."

"But for a brother mourning is indispensable, and the Church bids us——"

"Then buy mourning out of your six louis; a band of crape will do for me; you can get me a band of crape."

Eugénie said nothing, and raised her eyes to heaven. Her generous instincts, so long repressed and dormant, had been suddenly awakened, and every kindly thought had been harshly checked as it had arisen. Outwardly this evening passed just as thousands of others had passed in their monotonous lives, but for the two women it was the most painful that they had ever spent. Eugénie sewed without raising her head; she took no notice of the workbox which Charles had looked at so scornfully yesterday evening. Mme.

Grandet knitted away at her cuffs. Grandet sat twirling his thumbs, absorbed in schemes which should one day bring about results that would startle Saumur. Four hours went by. Nobody dropped in to see them. As a matter of fact, the whole town was ringing with the news of Grandet's sharp practice, following on the news of his brother's failure and his nephew's arrival. So imperatively did Saumur feel the need to thrash these matters thoroughly out, that all the vine-growers, great or small, were assembled beneath the des Grassins' roof, and frightful were the imprecations which were launched at the head of their late mayor.

Nanon was spinning; the whirr of her wheel was the only sound in the great room beneath the gray-painted rafters.

"Our tongues don't go very fast," she said, showing her large teeth, white as blanched almonds.

"There is no call for them to go," answered Grandet, roused from his calculations.

He beheld a vision of the future—he saw eight millions in three years' time—he had set forth on a long voyage upon a golden sea.

"Let us go to bed. I will go up and wish my nephew a good-night from you all, and see if he wants anything."

Mme. Grandet stayed on the landing outside her room-door to hear what her worthy husband might say to Charles. Eugénie, bolder than her mother, went a step or two up the second flight.

"Well, nephew, you are feeling unhappy? Yes, cry, it is only natural, a father is a father. But we must bear our troubles patiently. Whilst you have been crying, I have been thinking for you; I am a kind uncle, you see. Come, don't lose heart. Will you take a little wine? Wine costs nothing at Saumur; it is common here; they offer it as they might offer you a cup of tea in the Indies. But you are all in the dark," Grandet went on. "That's bad, that's bad; one ought to see what one is doing."

Grandet went to the chimney-piece.

"What!" he cried, "a wax-candle! Where the devil have they fished that from? I believe the wenches would pull up the floor of my house to cook eggs for that boy."

Mother and daughter, hearing these words, fled to their rooms, and crept into their beds like frightened mice.

"Mme. Grandet, you have a lot of money somewhere, it seems," said the vine-grower, walking into his wife's rooms.

"I am saying my prayers, dear; wait a little," faltered the poor mother.

"The Devil take your pious notions!" growled Grandet.

Misers have no belief in a life to come, the present is all in all to them. But if this thought gives an insight into the miser's springs of action, it possesses a wider application, it throws a pitiless light upon our own era—for money is the one all-powerful force, ours is pre-eminently the epoch when money is the lawgiver, socially and politically. Books and institutions, theories and practice, all alike combine to weaken the belief in a future life, the foundation on which the social edifice has been slowly reared for eighteen hundred years. The grave has almost lost its terrors for us. That future which awaited us beyond the *requiem* has been transported into the present, and one hope and one ambition possesses us all—to pass *per fas et nefas* into this earthly paradise of luxury, vanity, and pleasure, to deaden the soul and mortify the body for a brief possession of this promised land, just as in other days men were found willing to lay down their lives and to suffer martyrdom for the hope of eternal bliss. This thought can be read at large; it is stamped upon our age, which asks of the voter—the man who makes the laws—not "What do you think?" but "What can you pay?" And what will become of us when this doctrine has been handed down from the bourgeoisie to the people?

"Mme. Grandet, have you finished?" asked the cooper.

"I am praying for you, dear."

"Very well, good-night. To-morrow morning I shall have something to say to you."

Poor woman! she betook herself to sleep like a schoolboy who has not learned his lessons, and sees before him the angry face of the master when he wakes. Sheer terror led her to wrap the sheets about her head to shut out all sounds, but just at that moment she felt a kiss on her fore-

head; it was Eugénie who had slipped into the room in the darkness, and stood there barefooted in her nightdress.

"Oh! mother, my kind mother," she said, "I shall tell him to-morrow morning that it was all my doing."

"No, don't; if you do, he will send you away to Noyers. Let me manage it; he will not eat me, after all."

"Oh! mamma, do you hear?"

"What?"

"*He* is crying still."

"Go back to bed, dear. The floor is damp, it will strike cold to your feet."

So ended the solemn day, which had brought for the poor wealthy heiress a lifelong burden of sorrow; never again would Eugénie Grandet sleep as soundly or as lightly as heretofore. It not seldom happens that at some time in their lives this or that human being will act literally "unlike himself," and yet in very truth in accordance with his nature. Is it not rather that we form our hasty conclusions of him without the aid of such light as psychology affords, without attempting to trace the mysterious birth and growth of the causes which led to these unforeseen results? And this passion, which had its roots in the depths of Eugénie's nature, should perhaps be studied as if it were the delicate fiber of some living organism to discover the secret of its growth. It was a passion that would influence her whole life, so that one day it would be sneeringly called a malady. Plenty of people would prefer to consider a catastrophe improbable rather than undertake the task of tracing the sequence of the events that led to it, to discovering how the links of the chain were forged one by one in the mind of the actor. In this case, Eugénie's past life will suffice to keen observers of human nature; her artless impulsiveness, her sudden outburst of tenderness will be no surprise to them. Womanly pity, that treacherous feeling, had filled her soul but the more completely because her life had been so uneventful that it had never been so called forth before.

So the trouble and excitement of the day disturbed her rest; she woke again and again to listen for any sound from her cousin's room, thinking that she still heard the

moans that all day long had vibrated through her heart. Sometimes she seemed to see him lying up there, dying of grief; sometimes she dreamed that he was being starved to death. Towards morning she distinctly heard a terrible cry. She dressed herself at once, and in the dim light of the dawn fled noiselessly up the stairs to her cousin's room. The door stood open, the wax-candle had burned itself down to the socket. Nature had asserted herself; Charles, still dressed, was sleeping in the armchair, with his head fallen forward on the bed; he had been dreaming as famished people dream. Eugénie admired the fair young face. It was flushed and tear-stained; the eyelids were swollen with weeping; he seemed to be still crying in his sleep, and Eugénie's own tears fell fast. Some dim feeling that his cousin was present awakened Charles; he opened his eyes, and saw her distress.

"Pardon me, cousin," he said dreamily. Evidently he had lost all reckoning of time, and did not know where he was.

"There are hearts here that feel for you, cousin, and *we* thought that you might perhaps want something. You should go to bed; you will tire yourself out if you sleep like that."

"Yes," he said, "that is true."

"Good-by," she said, and fled, half in confusion, half-glad that she had come. Innocence alone dares to be thus bold, and virtue armed with knowledge weighs its actions as carefully as vice.

Eugénie had not trembled in her cousin's presence, but when she reached her own room again she could scarcely stand. Her ignorant life had suddenly come to an end; she remonstrated with herself, and blamed herself again and again. "What will he think of me? He will believe that I love him." Yet she knew that this was exactly what she wished him to believe. Love spoke plainly within her, knowing by instinct how love calls forth love. The moment when she stole into her cousin's room became a memorable event in the girl's lonely life. Are there not thoughts and deeds which, in love, are for some souls like a solemn betrothal?

An hour later she went to her mother's room, to help her to dress, as she always did. Then the two women went downstairs and took their places by the window, and waited for Grandet's coming in the anxiety which freezes or burns. Some natures cower, and others grow reckless, when a scene or painful agitation is in prospect; the feeling of dread is so widely felt that domestic animals will cry out when the slightest pain is inflicted on them as a punishment, while the same creature if hurt inadvertently will not utter a sound.

The cooper came downstairs, spoke in an absent-minded way to his wife, kissed Eugénie, and sat down to table. He seemed to have forgotten last night's threats.

"What has become of my nephew? The child is not much in the way."

"He is asleep, sir," said Nanon.

"So much the better, he won't want a wax-candle for that," said Grandet facetiously.

His extraordinary mildness and satirical humor puzzled Mme. Grandet; she looked earnestly at her husband. The good man—here, perhaps, it may be observed that in Touraine, Anjou, Poitou, and Brittany the designation *good man* (*bon homme*), which has been so often applied to Grandet, conveys no idea of merit; it is allowed to people of the worst temper as well as to good-natured idiots, and is applied without distinction to any man of a certain age—the good man, therefore, took up his hat and gloves with the remark—

"I am going to have a look round in the market-place; I want to meet the Cruchots."

"Eugénie, your father certainly has something on his mind."

As a matter of fact, Grandet always slept but little, and was wont to spend half the night in revolving and maturing schemes, a process by which his views, observations, and plans gained amazingly in clearness and precision; indeed, this was the secret of that constant success which was the admiration of Saumur. Time and patience combined will effect most things, and the man who accomplishes much is

the man with the strong will who can wait. The miser's life is a constant exercise of every human faculty in the service of a personality. He believes in self-love and interest, and in no other motives of action, but interest is in some sort another form of self-love, to wit, a practical form dealing with the tangible and the concrete, and both forms are comprised in one master-passion, for self-love and interest are but two manifestations of egoism. Hence, perhaps, the prodigious interest which a miser excites when cleverly put upon the stage. What man is utterly without ambition? And what social ambition can be obtained without money? Everyone has something in common with this being; he is a personification of humanity, and yet is revolting to all the feelings of humanity.

Grandet really "had something on his mind," as his wife used to say. In Grandet, as in every miser, there was a keen relish for the game, a constant craving to play men off one against another for his own benefit, to mulct them of their crowns without breaking the law. And did not every victim who fell into his clutches renew his sense of power, his just contempt for the weak of the earth who let themselves fall such an easy prey? Ah! who has understood the meaning of the lamb that lies in peace at the feet of God, that most touching symbol of meek victims who are doomed to suffer here below, and of the future that awaits them hereafter, of weakness and suffering glorified at last? But here on earth it is quite otherwise; the lamb is the miser's legitimate prey, and by him (when it is fat enough) it is contemptuously penned, killed, cooked, and eaten. On money and on this feeling of contemptuous superiority, we may say, the miser thrives.

During the night this excellent man's ideas had taken an entirely new turn; hence his unusual mildness. He had been weaving a web to entangle them in Paris; he would envelop them in its toils, they should be as clay in his hands; they should hope and tremble, come and go, toil and sweat, and all for his amusement, all for the old cooper in the dingy room at the head of the worm-eaten staircase in the old house at Saumur; it tickled his sense of humor.

He had been thinking about his nephew. He wanted to save his dead brother's name from dishonor in a way that should not cost a penny either to his nephew or to himself. He was about to invest his money for three years, his mind was quite at leisure from his own affairs; he really needed some outlet for his malicious energy, and here was an opportunity supplied by his brother's failure. The claws were idle, he had nothing to squeeze between them, so he would pound the Parisians for Charles's benefit, and exhibit himself in the light of an excellent brother at a very cheap rate. As a matter of fact, the honor of the family name counted for very little with him in this matter; he looked at it from the purely impersonal point of view of the gambler, who likes to see a game well played, although it is no affair of his. The Cruchots were necessary to him, but he did not mean to go in search of them; they should come to him. That very evening the comedy should begin, the main outlines were decided upon already, to-morrow he would be held up as an object of admiration all over the town, and his generosity should not cost him a farthing!

Eugénie, in her father's absence, was free to busy herself openly for her cousin, to feel the pleasure of pouring out for him in many ways the wealth of pity that filled her heart; for in pity alone women are content that we should feel their superiority, and the sublimity of devotion is the one height which they can pardon us for leaving to them.

Three or four times Eugénie went to listen to her cousin's breathing, that she might know whether he was awake or still sleeping; and when she was sure that he was rising, she turned her attention to his breakfast, and cream, coffee, fruit, eggs, plates, and glasses were all in turn the objects of her especial care. She softly climbed the rickety stairs to listen again. Was he dressing? Was he still sobbing? She went to the door at last and spoke—

“Cousin!”

“Yes, cousin.”

“Would you rather have breakfast downstairs or up here in your room?”

“Whichever you please.”

"How do you feel?"

"I am ashamed to say that I am hungry."

This talk through the closed door was like an episode in a romance for Eugénie.

"Very well then, we will bring your breakfast up to your room, so that my father may not be vexed about it."

She sprang downstairs, and ran into the kitchen with the swiftness of a bird.

"Nanon, just go and set his room straight."

The familiar staircase which she had gone up and down so often, and which echoed with every sound, seemed no longer old in Eugénie's eyes; it was radiant with light, it seemed to speak a language which she understood, it was young again as she herself was, young like the love in her heart. And the mother, the kind, indulgent mother, was ready to lend herself to her daughter's whims, and as soon as Charles's room was ready they both went thither to sit with him. Does not Christian charity bid us comfort the mourner? Little religious sophistries were not wanting by which the women justified themselves.

Charles Grandet received the most tender and affectionate care. Such delicate tact and sweet kindness touched him very closely in his desolation; and for these two souls, they found a moment's freedom from the restraint under which they lived; they were at home in an atmosphere of sorrow; they could give him the quick sympathy of fellowship in misfortune. Eugénie could avail herself of the privilege of relationship to set his linen in order, and to arrange the trifles that lay on the dressing-table; she could admire the wonderful knickknacks at her leisure; all the paraphernalia of luxury, the delicately wrought gold and silver passed through her hands, her fingers dwelt lingeringly on them under the pretext of looking closely at the workmanship.

Charles was deeply touched by the generous interest which his aunt and cousin took in him. He knew Parisian life quite sufficiently to know that under these circumstances his old acquaintances and friends would have grown cold and distant at once. But his trouble had brought out all the

peculiar beauty of Eugénie's character, and he began to admire the simplicity of manner which had provoked his amusement but yesterday. So when Eugénie waited on her cousin with such frank good-will, taking from Nanon the earthenware bowl full of coffee and cream to set it before him herself, the Parisian's eyes filled with tears; and when he met her kind glance, he impulsively took her hand in his and fervently kissed it.

"Well, what is the matter now?" she asked.

"Oh! they are tears of gratitude," he answered.

Eugénie turned hastily away, took the candles from the chimney-piece and held them out to Nanon.

"Here," she said, "take these away."

When she could look at her cousin again, the flush was still on her face, but her eyes at least did not betray her, and gave no sign of the excess of joy that flooded her heart; yet the same thought was dawning in both their souls, and could be read in the eyes of either, and they knew that the future was theirs. This thrill of happiness was all the sweeter to Charles in his great sorrow, because it was so little expected.

There was a knock at the door, and both the women hurried down to their places by the window. It was lucky for them that their flight downstairs was sufficiently precipitate, and that they were at their work when Grandet came in, for if he had met them beneath the archway, all his suspicions would be aroused at once. After the mid-day meal, which he took standing, the keeper, who had not yet received his promised reward, appeared from Froidfond, bringing with him a hare, some partridges shot in the park, a few eels, and a couple of pike sent by him from the miller's.

"Aha! so here is old Cornoiller; you come just when you are wanted, like salt fish in Lent. Is all that fit to eat?"

"Yes, sir; all killed the day before yesterday."

"Come, Nanon, look alive! Just take this, it will do for dinner to-day; the two Cruchots are coming."

Nanon opened her eyes with amazement, and stared first at one and then at another.

"Oh! indeed," she said, "and where are the herbs and the bacon to come from?"

"Wife," said Grandet, "let Nanon have six francs, and remind me to go down into the cellar to look out a bottle of good wine."

"Well, then, M. Grandet," the gamekeeper began (he wished to see the question of his salary properly settled, and was duly primed with a speech), "M. Grandet——"

"Tut, tut, tut," said Grandet, "I know what you are going to say; you are a good fellow, we will see about that to-morrow; I am very busy to-day. Give him five francs, wife," he added, looking at Mme. Grandet, and with that he beat a retreat. The poor woman was only too happy to purchase peace at the price of eleven francs. She knew by experience that Grandet usually kept quiet for a fortnight after he had made her disburse coin by coin the money which he had given her.

"There, Cornoiller," she said, as she slipped ten francs into his hand; "we will repay you for your services one of these days."

Cornoiller had no answer ready, so he went.

"Madame," said Nanon, who had by this time put on her black bonnet and had a basket on her arm, "three francs will be quite enough; keep the rest. I shall manage just as well with three."

"Let us have a good dinner, Nanon; my cousin is coming downstairs," said Eugénie.

"There is something very extraordinary going on, I am sure," said Mme. Grandet. "This makes the third time since we were married that your father has asked anyone here to dinner."

It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon; Eugénie and her mother had laid the cloth and set the table for six persons, and the master of the house had brought up two or three bottles of the exquisite wines, which are jealously hoarded in the cellars of the vine-growing district.

Charles came into the dining-room looking white and sad; there was a pathetic charm about his gestures, his face, his looks, the tones of his voice; his sorrow had given him the

interesting look that women like so well, and Eugénie only loved him the more because his features were worn with pain. Perhaps, too, this trouble had brought them nearer in other ways. Charles was no longer the rich and handsome young man who lived in a sphere far beyond her ken; he was a kinsman in deep and terrible distress, and sorrow is a great leveler. Woman has this in common with the angels—all suffering creatures are under her protection.

Charles and Eugénie understood each other without a word being spoken on either side. The poor dandy of yesterday, fallen from his high estate, to-day was an orphan, who sat in a corner of the room, quiet, composed, and proud; but from time to time he met his cousin's eyes, her kind and affectionate glance rested on him, and compelled him to shake off his dark and somber broodings, and to look forward with her to a future full of hope, in which she loved to think that she might share.

The news of Grandet's dinner-party caused even greater excitement in Saumur than the sale of his vintage, although this latter proceeding had been a crime of the blackest dye, an act of high treason against the vine-growing interest. If Grandet's banquet to the Cruchots has been prompted by the same idea which on a memorable occasion cost Alcibiades's dog its tail, history might perhaps have heard of the miser; but he felt himself to be above public opinion in this town which he exploited; he held Saumur too cheap.

It was not long before the des Grassins heard of Guillaume Grandet's violent end and impending bankruptcy. They determined to pay a visit to their client that evening, to condole with him in his affliction, and to show a friendly interest; while they endeavored to discover the motives which could have led Grandet to invite the Cruchots to dinner at such a time.

Precisely at five o'clock President C. de Bonfons and his uncle the notary arrived, dressed up to the nines this time. The guests seated themselves at table, and began by attacking their dinner with remarkably good appetites. Grandet was solemn, Charles was silent, Eugénie was dumb, and Mme. Grandet said no more than usual; if it had been

a funeral repast, it could not well have been less lively. When they rose from the table, Charles addressed his aunt and uncle—

“Will you permit me to withdraw? I have some long and difficult letters to write.”

“By all means, nephew.”

When Charles had left the room, and his amiable relative could fairly assume that he was out of earshot and deep in his correspondence, Grandet gave his wife a sinister glance.

“Mme. Grandet, what we are going to say will be Greek to you; it is half-past seven o’clock, you ought to be off to bed by this time. Good-night, my daughter.” He kissed Eugénie, and mother and daughter left the room.

Then the drama began. Now, if ever in his life, Grandet displayed all the shrewdness which he had acquired in the course of his long experience of men and business, and all the cunning which had gained him the nickname of “old fox” among those who had felt his teeth a little too sharply. Had the ambition of the late mayor of Saumur soared a little higher; if he had had the luck to rise to a higher social sphere, and destiny had sent him to mingle in some congress in which the fate of nations is at stake, the genius which he was now devoting to his own narrow ends would doubtless have done France glorious service. And yet, after all, the probability is that once away from Saumur the worthy cooper would have cut but a poor figure, and that minds, like certain plants and animals, are sterile when removed to a distant climate and an alien soil.

“M-m-monsieur le P-p-président, you were s-s-saying that b-b-bankruptcy——”

Here the trick of stammering which it had pleased the vine-grower to assume so long ago that everyone believed it to be natural to him (like the deafness of which he was wont to complain in rainy weather), grew so unbearably tedious for the Cruchot pair, that as they strove to catch the syllables, they made unconscious grimaces, moving their lips as if they would fain finish the words in which the cooper entangled both himself and them at his pleasure.

And here, perhaps, is the fitting place to record the history of Grandet's deafness and the impediment in his speech. No one in Anjou had better hearing or could speak Angevin French more clearly and distinctly than the wily vine-grower—when he chose. Once upon a time, in spite of all his shrewdness, a Jew had gotten the better of him. In the course of their discussion the Israelite had applied his hand to his ear, in the manner of an ear-trumpet, the better to catch what was said, and had gibbered to such purpose in his search for a word, that Grandet, a victim to his own humanity, felt constrained to suggest to that crafty Hebrew the words and ideas of which the Israelite appeared to be in search, to finish himself the reasonings of the said Hebrew, to say for that accursed alien all that he ought to have said for himself, till Grandet ended by fairly changing places with the Jew.

From this curious contest of wits the vine-grower did not emerge triumphant; indeed, for the first and last time in his business career he made a bad bargain. But loser though he was from a money point of view, he had received a great practical lesson, and later on he reaped the fruits of it. Wherefore in the end he blessed the Jew who had shown him how to wear out the patience of an opponent, and to keep him so closely employed in expressing his adversary's ideas that he completely lost sight of his own. The present business required more deafness, more stammering, more of the mazy circumlocutions in which Grandet was wont to involve himself, than any previous transaction in his life; for, in the first place, he wished to throw the responsibility of his ideas on someone else; someone else was to suggest his own schemes to him, while he was to keep himself to himself, and leave everyone in the dark as to his real intentions.

“Mon-sieur de B-B-Bonfons.” (This was the second time in three years that he had called the younger Cruchot “M. de Bonfons,” and the president might well consider that this was almost tantamount to being acknowledged as the crafty cooper's son-in-law.)

“You were s-s-s-saying that in certain cases, p-p-p-pro-

ceedings in b-b-bankruptcy might be s-s-s-stopped b-b-by——”

“At the instance of a Tribunal of Commerce. That is done every day of the year,” said M. C. de Bonfons, guessing, as he thought, at old Grandet’s idea, and running away with it. “Listen!” he said, and in the most amiable way he prepared to explain himself.

“I am l-listening,” replied the older man meekly, and his face assumed a demure expression; he looked like some small boy who is laughing in his sleeve at the schoolmaster while appearing to pay the most respectful attention to every word.

“When anybody who is in a large way of business and is much looked up to, like your late brother in Paris, for instance——”

“My b-b-brother, yes.”

“When anyone in that position is likely to find himself insolvent——”

“Ins-s-solvent, do they call it?”

“Yes. When his failure is imminent, the Tribunal of Commerce, to which he is amenable (do you follow me?), has power by a judgment to appoint liquidators to wind up the business. Liquidation is not bankruptcy, do you understand? It is a disgraceful thing to be a bankrupt, but a *liquidation* reflects no discredit on a man.”

“It is quite a d-d-d-different thing, if only it d-d-does not cost any more,” said Grandet.

“Yes. But a liquidation can be privately arranged without having recourse to the Tribunal of Commerce,” said the president as he took a pinch of snuff. “How is a man declared bankrupt!”

“Yes, how?” inquired Grandet. “I have n-n-never thought about it.”

“In the first place, he may himself file a petition and leave his schedule with the clerk of the court, the debtor himself draws it up or authorizes someone else to do so, and it is duly registered. Or, in the second place, his creditors may make him a bankrupt. But supposing the debtor does not file a petition, and none of his creditors make appli-

cation to the court for a judgment declaring him bankrupt; now let us see what happens then!"

"Yes, let us s-s-see."

"In that case, the family of the deceased, or his representatives, or his residuary legatee, or the man himself (if he is not dead), or his friends for him (if he has absconded), liquidate his affairs. Now, possibly, *you* may intend to do this in your brother's case?" inquired the president.

"Oh! Grandet," exclaimed the notary, "that would be acting very handsomely. We in the provinces have our notions of honor. If you saved your name from dishonor, for it is your name, you would be——"

"Sublime!" cried the president, interrupting his uncle.

"Of course, my b-b-brother's n-n-name was Grandet, th-that is certain sure, I d-d-don't deny it, and anyhow this l-l-l-liquidation would be a very g-good thing for my n-n-nephew in every way, and I am very f-f-fond of him. But we shall see. I know n-n-nothing of those sharpers in Paris, and their t-tricks. And here am I at S-Saumur, you see! There are my vine-cuttings, m-my d-d-draining; in sh-sh-short, there are my own af-f-fairs, to s-s-see after. I have n-n-never accepted a bill. What is a bill? I have t-t-taken many a one, b-b-but I have n-n-never put my n-n-name to a piece of p-paper. You t-t-take 'em and you can d-d-d-discount 'em, and that is all I know. I have heard s-s-say that you can b-b-b-buy them——"

"Yes," assented the president. "You can buy bills on the market, less so much per cent. Do you understand?"

Grandet held his hand to his ear, and the president repeated his remark.

"But it s-s-seems there are t-t-two s-sides to all this?" replied the vine-grower. "At my age, I know n-n-nothing about this s-s-sort of thing. I must st-stop here to l-look after the g-g-grapes, the vines d-d-don't stand still, and the g-g-grapes have to p-pay for everything. The vintage m-must be l-l-looked after before anything else. Then I have a g-great d-d-deal on my hands at Froidfond that I can't p-p-possibly l-l-l-leave to anyone else. I don't underst-t-and a word of all this; it is a p-p-pretty kettle of fish,

confound it; I can't l-l-leave home to s-see after it. You s-s-s-say that to bring about a l-l-liquidation I ought to be in Paris. Now you can't be in t-t-two p-places at once unless you are a b-b-bird."

"I see what you mean," cried the notary. "Well, my old friend, you have friends, friends of long standing ready to do a great deal for you."

"Come, now!" said the vine-grower to himself, "so you are making up your minds, are you?"

"And if someone were to go to Paris, and find up your brother Guillaume's largest creditor, and say to him——"

"Here, just l-l-listen to me a moment," the cooper struck in. "Say to him—what? S-s-something like this: 'M. Grandet of Saumur th-this, M. Grandet of Saumur th-th-that. He l-l-loves his brother, he has a r-r-regard for his n-nephew; Grandet thinks a l-l-lot of his f-family, he means to d-do well by them. He has just s-s-sold his vintage uncommonly well. Don't drive the thing into b-b-b-bankruptcy, call a meeting of the creditors, and ap-p-point l-l-liquidators. Then s-see what Grandet will do. You will do a great d-deal b-b-better for yourselves by coming to an arrangement than by l-l-letting the l-l-lawyers poke their noses into it.' That is how it is, eh?"

"Quite so!" said the president.

"Because, look you here, M. de Bon-Bon-Bonfons, you must l-l-look before you l-l-l-leap. And you can't d-do more than you can. A big af-f-fair like this wants l-l-look-ing into, or you may ru-ru-ruin yourself. That is so, isn't it, eh?"

"Certainly," said the president, "I myself am of the opinion that in a few months' time you could buy up the debts for a fixed sum and pay by installments. Aha! you can trail a dog a long way with a bit of bacon. When a man has not been declared bankrupt, as soon as the bills are in your hands, you will be as white as snow."

"As s-s-s-snow?" said Grandet, holding his hand to his ear. "S-s-s-snow. I don't underst-t-tand."

"Why, then, just listen to me!" cried the president.

"I am l-l-listening——"

“A bill of exchange is a commodity subject to fluctuations in value. This is a deduction from Jeremy Bentham’s theory of interest. He was a publicist who showed conclusively that the prejudices entertained against money-lenders were irrational.”

“Bless me!” put in Grandet.

“And seeing that, according to Bentham, money itself is a commodity, and that which money represents is no less a commodity,” the president went on; “and since it is obvious that the commodity called a bill of exchange is subject to the same laws of supply and demand that control production of all kinds, a bill of exchange bearing this or that signature, like this or that article of commerce, is scarce or plentiful in the market, commands a high premium or is worth nothing at all. Wherefore the decision of this court—— There! how stupid I am, I beg your pardon; I mean I am of the opinion that you could easily buy up your brother’s debts for twenty-five per cent. of their value.”

“You m-m-m-mentioned Je-Je-Je-Jeremy Ben——”

“Bentham, an Englishman.”

“That is a Jeremiah who will save us many lamentations in business matters,” said the notary, laughing.

“The English s-s-sometimes have s-s-s-sensible notions,” said Grandet. “Then, according to B-Bentham, how if my b-b-brother’s b-bills are worth n-n-n-nothing? If I am right, it looks to me as if—the creditors would—no-no, they wouldn’t—I underst-t-tand.”

“Let me explain all this to you,” said the president. “In law, if you hold all the outstanding bills of the firm of Grandet, your brother, his heirs and assigns, would owe no one a penny. So far, so good.”

“Good,” echoed Grandet.

“And in equity; suppose that your brother’s bills were negotiated upon the market (negotiated, do you understand the meaning of that term?) at a loss of so much per cent.; and suppose one of your friends happened to be passing, and bought up the bills; there would have been no physical force brought to bear upon the creditors, they gave them

up of their own free-will, and the estate of the late Grandet of Paris would be clear in the eye of the law."

"True," stuttered the cooper, "b-b-business is business. So that is s-s-s-settled. But, for all that, you understand that it is a d-d-difficult matter. I have not the m-m-money, nor have I the t-t-t-time, nor——"

"Yes, yes; you cannot be at the trouble. Well, now, I will go to Paris for you if you like (you must stand the expenses of the journey, that is a mere trifle). I will see the creditors, and talk to them, and put them off; it can all be arranged; you will be prepared to add something to the amount realized by the liquidation so as to get the bills into your hands."

"We shall s-see about that; I cannot and *will* not under-t-t-take anything unless I know—You can't d-d-do more than you can, you know."

"Quite so, quite so."

"And I am quite bewildered with all these head-splitting ideas that you have sp-prung upon me. Th-this is the f-f-f-first t-time in my l-l-life that I have had to th-th-think about such th——"

"Yes, yes, you are not a consulting barrister."

"I am a p-p-poor vine-grower, and I know n-n-nothing about what you have just t-t-t-told me; I m-m-must th-th-think it all out."

"Well! then," began the president, as if he meant to reopen the discussion.

"Nephew!" interrupted the notary reproachfully.

"Well, uncle?" answered the president.

"Let M. Grandet explain what he means to do. It is a very important question, and you are to receive his instructions. Our dear friend might now very pertinently state——"

A knock at the door announced the arrival of the des Grassins; their coming and exchange of greetings prevented Cruchot senior from finishing his sentence. Nor was he ill-pleased with this diversion; Grandet was looking askance at him already, and there was that about the wen on the cooper's face which indicated that a storm was brewing

within. And on sober reflection it seemed to the cautious notary that a president of a court of first instance was not exactly the person to dispatch to Paris, there to open negotiations with creditors, and to lend himself to a more than dubious transaction which, however you looked at it, hardly squared with notions of strict honesty; and not only so, but he had particularly noticed that M. Grandet had shown not the slightest inclination to disburse anything whatever, and he trembled instinctively at the thought of his nephew becoming involved in such a business. He took advantage of the entrance of the des Grassins, took his nephew by the arm, and drew him into the embrasure of the window.

“You have gone quite as far as there is any need,” he said, “that is quite enough of such zeal; you are overreaching yourself in your eagerness to marry the girl. The devil! You should not rush into a thing open-mouthed, like a crow at a walnut. Leave the steering of the ship to me for a bit, and just shift your sails according to the wind. Now, is it a part you ought to play, compromising your dignity as magistrate in such a——”

He broke off suddenly, for he heard M. des Grassins saying to the old cooper, as he held out his hand—

“Grandet, we have heard of the dreadful misfortunes which have befallen your family—the ruin of the firm of Guillaume Grandet and your brother’s death; we have come to express our sympathy and to offer you our consolation in this sad calamity.”

“There is only one misfortune,” the notary interrupted at this point, “the death of the younger M. Grandet; and if he had thought to ask his brother for assistance, he would not have taken his own life. Our old friend here, who is a man of honor to his finger-tips, is prepared to discharge the debts contracted by the firm of Grandet in Paris. In order to spare our friend the worry of what is, after all, a piece of lawyer’s business, my nephew the president offers to start immediately for Paris, so as to arrange with the creditors, and duly satisfy their claims.”

The three des Grassins were thoroughly taken aback by

these words; Grandet appeared to acquiesce in what had been said, for he was pensively stroking his chin. On their way to the house the family had commented very freely upon Grandet's niggardliness, and indeed had almost gone so far as to accuse him of fratricide.

"Ah! just what I expected!" cried the banker, looking at his wife. "What was I saying to you only just now as we came along, Mme. des Grassins? Grandet, I said, is a man who will never swerve a hair's-breadth from the strict course of honor; he will not endure the thought of the slightest spot on his name! Money without honor is a disease. Oh! we have a keen sense of honor in the provinces! This is noble—really noble of you, Grandet. I am an old soldier, and I do not mince matters, I say what I think straight out; and *mille tonnerres!* [thousand thunders] this is sublime!"

"Then the s-s-sub-sublime costs a great d-d-deal," stuttered the cooper, as the banker shook him warmly by the hand.

"But this, my good Grandet (no offense to you, M. le Président), is simply a matter of business," des Grassins went on, "and requires an experienced man of business to deal with it. There will have to be accounts kept of sales and outgoing expenses; you ought to have tables of interest at your finger-ends. I must go to Paris on business of my own, and I could undertake——"

"Then we must s-s-see about it, and t-t-t-try to arrange between us to p-p-provide for anything that m-may t-t-turn up, but I d-d-don't want to be d-d-drawn into anything that I would rather not d-d-d-do," continued Grandet, "because, you see, M. le Président naturally wants me to pay his expenses." The good man did not stammer over these last words.

"Eh?" said Mme. des Grassins. "Why, it is a pleasure to stay in Paris! For my part, I should be glad to go there at my own expense."

She made a sign to her husband, urging him to seize this opportunity of discomfiting their enemies and cheat them of their mission. Then she flung a withering glance at the

now crestfallen and miserable Cruchots. Grandet seized the banker by the buttonhole and drew him aside.

"I should feel far more confidence in you than in the president," he remarked; "and besides that," he added (and the wen twitched a little), "there are other fish to fry. I want to make an investment. I have several thousand francs to put into consols, and I don't mean to pay more than eighty for them. Now, from all I can hear, that machine always runs down at the end of the month. You know all about these things, I expect?"

"*Pardieu!* I should think I did. Well, then, I shall have to buy several thousand livres worth of consols for you."

"Just by way of a beginning. But mum, I want to play at this game without letting anyone know about it. You will buy them for me at the end of the month, and say nothing to the Cruchots; it would only annoy them. Since you are going to Paris, we might as well see at the same time what trumps are for my poor nephew's sake."

"That is an understood thing. I shall travel post to Paris to-morrow," said des Grassins aloud, "and I will come round to take your final instructions at—when shall we say?"

"At five o'clock, before dinner," said the vine-grower, rubbing his hands.

The two factions for a little while remained facing each other. Des Grassins broke the silence again, clapping Grandet on the shoulder, and saying:

"It is a fine thing to have a good uncle like——"

"Yes, yes," returned Grandet, falling into the stammer again, "without m-making any p-p-parade about it; I am a good uncle; I l-l-loved my brother; I will give p-p-p-proof of it, if-if-if it d-doesn't cost——"

Luckily the banker interrupted him at this point.

"We must go, Grandet. If I am to set out sooner than I intended, I shall have to see after some business at once before I go."

"Right, quite right. I myself, in connection with you

know what, must p-p-put on my cons-s-sidering cap, as P-President Cruchot s-s-says."

"Plague take it! I am no longer M. de Bonfons," thought the magistrate moodily, and his face fell; he looked like a judge who is bored by the cause before him.

The heads of the rival clans went out together. Both had completely forgotten Grandet's treacherous crime of that morning; his disloyal behavior had faded from their minds. They sounded each other, but to no purpose, as to Grandet's real intentions (if intentions he had) in this new turn that matters had taken.

"Are you coming with us to Mme. Dorsonval's?" des Grassins asked the notary.

"We are going there later on," replied the president. "With my uncle's permission, we will go first to see Mlle. de Gribeaucourt; I promised just to look in on her to say good-night."

"We shall meet again, then," smiled Mme. des Grassins.

But when the des Grassins were at some distance from the two Cruchots, Adolphe said to his father, "They are in a pretty stew, eh?"

"Hush!" returned his mother, "they can very likely hear what we are saying, and, besides, that remark of yours was not in good taste; it sounds like one of your law school phrases."

"Well, uncle!" cried the magistrate, when he saw the des Grassins were out of earshot, "I began by being President de Bonfons and ended as plain Cruchot."

"I saw myself that you were rather put out about it; and the des Grassins took the wind out of our sails. How stupid you are, for all your sharpness! Let *them* set sail, on the strength of a 'We shall see' from Grandet; be easy, my boy, Eugénie shall marry you for all that."

A few moments later and the news of Grandet's magnanimity was set circulating in three houses at once; the whole town talked of nothing but Grandet's devotion to his brother. The sale of his vintage in utter disregard of the agreement made among the vine-growers was forgotten; everyone fell

to praising his scrupulous integrity and to lauding his generosity, a quality which no one had suspected him of possessing. There is that in the French character which is readily excited to fury or to passionate enthusiasm by any meteor that appears above their horizon, that is captivated by the bravery of a blatant fact. Can it be that collectively men have no memories?

As soon as Grandet had bolted the house-door he called to Nanon—

“Don’t go to bed,” he said, “and don’t unchain the dog; there is something to be done, and we must do it together. Cornoiller will be round with the carriage from Froidfond at eleven o’clock. You must sit up for him, and let him in quietly; don’t let him rap at the door, and tell him not to make a noise. You get into trouble with the police if you raise a racket at night. And, besides, there is no need to let all the quarter know that I am going out.”

Having thus delivered himself, Grandet went up to his laboratory, and Nanon heard him stirring about, rummaging, going and coming, all with great caution. Clearly he had no wish to waken his wife or daughter, and above all things he desired in nowise to excite any suspicion in the mind of his nephew; he had seen that a light was burning in the young man’s room, and had cursed his relative forthwith.

In the middle of the night Eugénie heard a sound like the groan of a dying man; her cousin was always in her thoughts, and for her the dying man was Charles. How white and despairing he had looked when he wished her good-night; perhaps he had killed himself. She hastily wrapped herself in her capuchine, a sort of long cloak with a hood to it, and determined to go to see for herself. Some rays of bright light streaming through the cracks of her door frightened her not a little at first, perhaps the house was on fire; but she was soon reassured. She could hear Nanon’s heavy footsteps outside, and the sounds of the old servant’s voice mingled with the neighing of several horses.

“Can my father be taking Charles away?” she asked herself, as she set her door ajar, cautiously for fear the

hinges should creak, so that she could watch all that was going on in the corridor.

All at once her eyes met those of her father, and, absent and indifferent as they looked, a cold shudder ran through her. The cooper and Nanon were coming along carrying something which hung by a chain from a stout cudgel, one end of which rested on the right shoulder of either; the something was a little barrel such as Grandet sometimes amused himself by making in the bakehouse, when he had nothing better to do.

"Holy Virgin! how heavy it is, sir!" said Nanon in a whisper.

"What a pity it is only full of pence!" replied the cooper.

"Look out! or you will knock down the candlestick."

The scene was lighted by a single candle set between two balusters.

"Cornoiller," said Grandet to his gamekeeper *in partibus*, "have you your pistols with you?"

"No, sir. Lord love you! What can there be to fear for a keg of coppers?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing," said M. Grandet.

"Besides, we shall get over the ground quickly," the keeper went on; "your tenants have picked out their best horses for you."

"Well, well. You did not let them know where I was going?"

"I did not know that myself."

"Right. Is the carriage strongly built?"

"That's all right, master. Why, what is the weight of a few paltry barrels like those of yours? It would carry two or three thousand like them."

"Well," said Nanon, "I know there's pretty nigh eighteen hundredweight *there*, that there is!"

"Will you hold your tongue, Nanon! You tell my wife that I have gone into the country, and that I shall be back to dinner. Hurry up, Cornoiller; we must be in Angers before nine o'clock."

The carriage started. Nanon bolted the gateway, let the dog loose, and lay down and slept in spite of her bruised

shoulder; and no one in the quarter had any suspicion of Grandet's journey or of its object. The worthy man was a miracle of circumspection. Nobody ever saw a penny lying about in that house full of gold. He had learned that morning from the gossip on the quay that some vessels were being fitted out at Nantes, and that in consequence gold was so scarce there that it was worth double its ordinary value, and speculators were buying it in Angers. The old cooper, by the simple device of borrowing his tenants' horses, was prepared to sell his gold at Angers, receiving in return an order upon the Treasury from the Receiver-General for the sum destined for the purchase of his consols, and an addition in the shape of the premium paid on his gold.

"My father is going out," said Eugénie to herself. She had heard all that had passed from the head of the staircase.

Silence reigned once more in the house. The rattle of the wheels in the streets of sleeping Saumur grew more and more distant, and at last died away. Then it was that a sound seemed to reach Eugénie's heart before it fell on her ears, a wailing sound that rang through the thin walls above—it came from her cousin's room. There was a thin line of light, scarcely wider than a knife edge, beneath his door; the rays slanted through the darkness and left a bright gleaming bar along the balusters of the crazy staircase.

"He is unhappy," she said, as she went up a little farther.

A second moan brought her to the landing above. The door stood ajar; she thrust it open. Charles was sleeping in the rickety old armchair, his head drooped over to one side, his hand hung down and nearly touched the floor, the pen that he had let fall lay beneath his fingers. Lying in this position, his breath came in quick, sharp jerks that startled Eugénie. She entered hastily.

"He must be very tired," she said to herself, as she saw a dozen sealed letters lying on the table. She read the addresses—*MM. Farry, Breilman & Co., carriage builders; M. Buisson, tailor*; and so forth.

"Of course, he has been settling his affairs, so that he may leave France as soon as possible," she thought.

Her eyes fell upon two unsealed letters. One of them began: "My dear Annette"— She felt dazed, and could see nothing for a moment. Her heart beat fast, her feet seemed glued to the floor.

"*His dear Annette!* He loves, he is beloved!— Then there is no more hope!— What does he say to her?" These thoughts flashed through her heart and brain. She read the words everywhere: on the walls, on the very floor, in letters of fire.

"Must I give him up already? No, I will not read the letter. I ought not to stay— And yet, even if I did read it?"

She looked at Charles, gently took his head in her hands, and propped it against the back of the chair. He submitted like a child, who even while he is sleeping knows that it is his mother who is bending over him, and, without waking, feels his mother's kisses. Like a mother, Eugénie raised the drooping hand, and, like a mother, laid a soft kiss on his hair. "*Dear Annette!*" A mocking voice shrieked the words in her ear.

"I know that perhaps I may be doing wrong, but I will read that letter," she said.

Eugénie turned her eyes away; her high sense of honor reproached her. For the first time in her life there was a struggle between good and evil in her soul. Hitherto she had never done anything for which she needed to blush. Love and curiosity silenced her scruples. Her heart swelled higher with every phrase as she read; her quickened pulses seemed to send a sharp, tingling glow through her veins, and to heighten the vivid emotions of her first love.

"MY DEAR ANNETTE,—Nothing should have power to separate us save this overwhelming calamity that has befallen me, a calamity that no human foresight could have predicted. My father has died by his own hand; his fortune and mine are both irretrievably lost. I am left an orphan at an age when, with the kind of education I have

received, I am almost a child; and, nevertheless, I must now endeavor to show myself a man, and to rise from the dark depths into which I have been hurled. I have been spending part of my time to-night in revolving plans for my future. If I am to leave France as an honest man, as of course I mean to do, I have not a hundred francs that I can call my own with which to tempt fate in the Indies or in America. Yes, my poor Anna, I am going in quest of fortune to the most deadly foreign climes. Beneath such skies, they say, fortunes are rapidly and surely made. As for living on in Paris, I could not bring myself to do it. I could not face the coldness, the contempt, and the affronts that a ruined man, the son of a bankrupt, is sure to receive. Great Heaven! to owe two millions!—I should fall in a duel before a week had passed. So I shall not return to Paris. Your love—the tenderest, the most devoted love that ever ennobled the heart of man—would not seek to draw me back. Alas! my darling, I have not money enough to take me to you, that I might give and receive one last kiss, a kiss that should put strength into me for the task that lies before me——”

“Poor Charles, I did well to read this. I have money, and he shall have it,” said Eugénie. She went on with the letter when her tears permitted her to see.

“I have not even begun to think of the hardships of poverty. Supposing that I find I have the hundred louis to pay for my passage out, I have not a sou to lay out on a trading venture. Yet, no; I shall not have a hundred louis, nor yet a hundred sous; I have no idea whether anything will be left when I have settled all my debts in Paris. If there is nothing, I shall simply go to Nantes and work my passage out. I will begin at the bottom of the ladder, like many another man of energy who has gone out to the Indies as a penniless youth, to return thence a rich man. This morning I began to look my future steadily in the face. It is far harder for me than for others; I have been the petted child of a mother who idolized me, indulged by the best and kindest of fathers; and at my very entrance

into the world I met with the love of an Anna. As yet I have only known the primrose paths of life; such happiness could not last. Yet, dear Annette, I have more fortitude than could be looked for from a thoughtless youth; above all, from a young man thus lapped round in happiness from the cradle, spoiled and flattered by the most delightful woman in Paris, the darling of fortune, whose wishes were as law to a father who—— Oh! my father! He is dead, Annette! Well, I have thought seriously over my position, and I have likewise thought over yours. I have grown much older in the last twenty-four hours. Dear Anna, even if, to keep me beside you, you were to give up all the luxuries that you enjoy, your box at the opera, and your toilet, we should not have nearly sufficient for the necessary expenses of the extravagant life that I am accustomed to; and, besides, I could not think of allowing you to make such sacrifices for me. To-day, therefore, we part forever.”

“Then this is to take leave of her! Holy Virgin! what happiness!”

Eugénie started and trembled for joy. Charles stirred in his chair, and Eugénie felt a chill of dread. Luckily, however, he did not awaken. She went on reading.

“When shall I come back? I cannot tell. Europeans grow old before their time in those tropical countries, especially Europeans who work hard. Let us look forward and try to see ourselves in ten years’ time. In ten years from now your little girl will be eighteen years old; she will be your constant companion; that is, she will be a spy upon you. If the world will judge you very harshly, your daughter will probably judge more harshly still; such ingratitude on a young girl’s part is common enough, and we know how the world regards these things. Let us take warning and be wise. Only keep the memory of those four years of happiness in the depths of your soul, as I shall keep them buried in mine; and be faithful, if you can, to your poor friend. I shall not be too exacting, dear Annette; for, as you can see, I must submit to my altered lot; I am com-

pelled to look at life in a businesslike way, and to base my calculations on dull, prosaic fact. So I ought to think of marriage as a necessary step in my new existence; and I will confess to you that here, in my uncle's house in Saumur, there is a cousin whose manners, face, character, and heart you would approve; and who, moreover, has, it appears——”

“How tired he must have been to break off like this when he was writing to *her!*” said Eugénie to herself, as the letter ended abruptly in the middle of a sentence. She was ready with excuses for him.

How was it possible that an inexperienced girl should discover the coldness and selfishness of this letter? For young girls, religiously brought up as she had been, are innocent and unsuspecting, and can see nothing but love when they have set foot in love's enchanted kingdom. It is as if a light from heaven shone in their own souls, shedding its beams upon their path; their lover shines transfigured before them in reflected glory, radiant with fair colors from love's magic fires, and endowed with noble thoughts which perhaps in truth are none of his. Women's errors spring, for the most part, from a belief in goodness, and a confidence in truth. In Eugénie's heart the words, “My dear Annette—my beloved,” echoed like the fairest language of love; they stirred her soul like organ music—like the divine notes of the *Venite adoremus* falling upon her ears in childhood.

Surely the tears, not dry even yet upon her cousin's eyelids, betokened the innate nobility of nature that never fails to attract a young girl. How could she know that Charles's love and grief for his father, albeit genuine, was due rather to the fact that his father had loved him than to a deeply-rooted affection on his own part for his father? M. and Mme. Guillaume Grandet had indulged their son's every whim; every pleasure that wealth could bestow had been his; and thus it followed that he had never been tempted to make the hideous calculations that are only too common among the younger members of a family in Paris, when they see around them all the delights of Parisian life, and reflect with disgust that, so long as their parents are alive,

all these enjoyments are not for them. The strange result of the father's lavish kindness had been a strong affection on the part of his son, an affection unalloyed by any after-thought. But, for all that, Charles was a thorough child of Paris, with the Parisian's habit of mind; Annette herself had impressed upon him the importance of thinking out all the consequences of every step; he was not youthful, despite the mask of youth.

He had received the detestable education of a world in which more crimes (in thought and word at least) are committed in one evening than come before a court of justice in the course of a whole session; a world in which great ideas perish, done to death by a witticism, and where it is reckoned a weakness not to see things as they are. To see things as they are—that means, believe in nothing, put faith in nothing and in no man, for there is no such thing as sincerity in opinion or affection; mistrust events, for even events at times have been known to be manufactured. To see things as they are you must weigh your friend's purse morning by morning; you must know by instinct the right moment to interfere for your own profit in every matter that turns up; you must keep your judgment rigorously suspended, be in no hurry to admire a work of art or a noble deed, and give everyone credit for interested motives on every possible occasion.

After many follies, the great lady, the fair Annette, compelled Charles to think seriously; she talked to him of his future, passing a fragrant hand through his hair, and imparted counsel to him on the art of getting on in the world, while she twisted a stray curl about her fingers. She had made him effeminate, and now she set herself to make a materialist of him, a twofold work of demoralization, a corruption none the less deadly because it never offended against the canons of good society, good manners, and good taste.

"You are a simpleton, Charles," she would say; "I see that it will be no easy task to teach you the ways of the world. You are very naughty about M. des Lupeaulx. Oh! he is not over-fastidious, I grant you, but you should wait until he falls from power, and then you may despise him as

much as you like. Do you know what Mme. Campan used to say to us? ‘My children, so long as a man is a Minister, adore him; if he falls, help to drag him to the shambles. He is a kind of deity so long as he is in power, but after he is fallen and ruined he is viler than Marat himself, for he is still alive, while Marat is dead and out of sight. Life is nothing but a series of combinations, which must be studied and followed very carefully if a good position is to be successfully maintained.’ ”

Charles had no very exalted aims; he was too much of a worldling; he had been too much spoiled by his father and mother, too much flattered by the society in which he moved, to be stirred by any lofty enthusiasm. In the clay of his nature there was a grain of gold, due to his mother’s teaching; but it had been passed through the Parisian draw-plate, and beaten out into a thin surface gilding which must soon be worn away by contact with the world.

At this time Charles, however, was only one-and-twenty, and it is taken for granted that freshness of heart accompanies the freshness of youth; it seems so unlikely that the mind within should be at variance with the young face, and the young voice, and the candid glance. Even the hardest judge, the most skeptical attorney, the flintiest-hearted money-lender will hesitate to believe that a wizened heart and a warped and corrupted nature can dwell beneath a young exterior, when the forehead is smooth and tears come so readily to the eyes. Hitherto Charles had never had occasion to put his Parisian maxims in practice; his character had not been tried, and consequently had not been found wanting; but, all unknown to him, egoism had taken deep root in his nature. The seeds of this baneful political economy had been sown in his heart; it was only a question of time, they would spring up and flower so soon as the soil was stirred, as soon as he ceased to be an idle spectator and became an actor in the drama of real life.

A young girl is nearly always ready to believe unquestioningly in the promise of a fair exterior; but even if Eugénie had been as keenly observant and as cautious as girls in the provinces sometimes are, how could she have

brought herself to mistrust her cousin, when all he did and said, and everything about him, seemed to be the spontaneous outcome of a noble nature? This was the last outburst of real feeling, the last reproachful sigh of conscience in Charles's life; fate had thrown them together at that moment, and unfortunately for her, all her sympathies had been aroused for him.

So she laid down the letter that seemed to her so full of love, and gave herself up to the pleasure of watching her sleeping cousin; the dreams and hopes of youth seemed to hover over his face, and then and there she vowed to herself that she would love him always. She glanced over the other letter; there could be no harm in reading it, she thought; she should only receive fresh proofs of the noble qualities with which, womanlike, she had invested the man whom she had idealized.

"MY DEAR ALPHONSE," so it began, "by the time this letter is in your hands I shall have no friends left; but I will confess that though I put no faith in the worldly-minded people who use the word so freely, I have no doubts of your friendship for me. So I am commissioning you to settle some matters of business. I look to you to do the best you can for me in this, for all I have in the world is involved in it. By this time you must know how I am situated. I have nothing, and have made up my mind to go out to the Indies. I have just written to all the people to whom any money is owing, and the inclosed list is as accurate as I can make it from memory. I think the sale of my books, furniture, carriages, horses, and so forth ought to bring in sufficient to pay my debts. I only mean to keep back a few trinkets of little value, which will go some way towards a trading venture. I will send you a power of attorney in due form for this sale, my dear Alphonse, in case any difficulty should arise. You might send my guns and everything of that sort to me here. And you must take 'Briton'; no one would ever give me anything like as much as the splendid animal is worth; I would rather give him to you, you must regard him as the mourning ring which a dying man leaves in his

will to his executor. Farry, Breilman & Co. have been building a very comfortable traveling carriage for me, but they have not sent it home yet; get them to keep it if you can, and if they decline to have it left on their hands, make the best arrangement you can for me, and do all you can to save my honor in the position in which I am placed. I lost six louis at play to that fellow from the British Isles, mind that he is——”

“Dear cousin,” murmured Eugénie, letting the sheet fall, and, seizing one of the lighted candles, she hastened on tiptoe to her own room.

Once there, it was not without a keen feeling of pleasure that she opened one of the drawers in an old oak chest—a most beautiful specimen of the skill of the craftsmen of the Renaissance, you could still make out the half-effaced royal salamander upon it. From this drawer she took a large red velvet money-bag, with gold tassels, and the remains of a golden fringe about it, a bit of faded splendor that had belonged to her grandmother. In the pride of her heart she felt its weight, and joyously set to work to reckon up the value of her little hoard, sorting out the different coins. *Imprimis*, twenty Portuguese moidores, as new and fresh as when they were struck in 1725, in the reign of John V.; each was nominally worth five lisbonines, or a hundred and sixty-five francs, but actually they were worth a hundred and eighty francs (so her father used to tell her), a fancy value on account of the rarity and beauty of the aforesaid coins, which shone like the sun. *Item*, five genovines, rare Genoese coins of a hundred livres each, their current value was perhaps about eighty francs, but collectors would give a hundred for them. These had come to her from old M. de la Bertellière. *Item*, three Spanish quadruples of the time of Philip V., bearing the date 1729. Mme. Gentillet had given them to her, one by one, always with the same little speech: “There’s a little yellow bird, there’s a buttercup for you, worth ninety-eight livres! Take great care of it, darling; it will be the flower of your flock.” *Item* (and those were the coins that her father thought most

of, for the gold was a fraction over the twenty-three carats), a hundred Dutch ducats, struck at the Hague in 1756, and each worth about thirteen francs. *Item*, a great curiosity!—a few coins dear to a miser's heart, three rupees bearing the sign of the Balance, and five with the sign of the Virgin stamped upon them, all pure gold of twenty-four carats—the magnificent coins of the Great Mogul. The weight of metal in them alone was worth thirty-seven francs forty centimes, but amateurs who love to finger gold would give fifty francs for such coins as those. *Item*, the double napoleon that had been given to her the day before, and which she had carelessly slipped into the red velvet bag.

There were new gold pieces fresh from the mint among her treasures, real works of art, which old Grandet liked to look at from time to time, so that he might count them over and tell his daughter of their intrinsic value, expatiating also upon the beauty of the bordering, the sparkling field, the ornate lettering with its sharp, clean, flawless outlines. But now she gave not a thought to their beauty and rarity; her father's mania and the risks she ran by despoiling herself of a hoard so precious in his eyes were all forgotten. She thought of nothing but her cousin, and managed at last to discover, after many mistakes in calculation, that she was the owner of eighteen hundred francs all told, or of nearly two thousand francs if the coins were sold for their actual value as curiosities.

She clapped her hands in exultation at the sight of her riches, like a child who is compelled to find some outlet for his overflowing glee and dances for joy. Father and daughter had both counted their wealth that night; he in order to sell his gold, she that she might cast it abroad on the waters of love. She put the money back into the old purse, took it up, and went upstairs with it without a moment's hesitation. Her cousin's distress was the one thought in her mind; she did not even remember that it was night, conventionalities were utterly forgotten; her conscience did not reproach her, she was strong in her happiness and her love.

As she stood upon the threshold with the candle in one

hand and the velvet bag in the other, Charles awoke, saw his cousin, and was struck dumb with astonishment. Eugénie came forward, set the light on the table, and said with an unsteady voice—

“Cousin Charles, I have to ask your forgiveness for something I have done; it was very wrong, but if you will overlook it, God will forgive me.”

“What can it be?” asked Charles, rubbing his eyes.

“I have been reading those two letters.”

Charles reddened.

“Do you ask how I came to do it?” she went on, “and why I came up here? Indeed, I do not know now; and I am almost tempted to feel glad that I read the letters, for through reading them I have come to know your heart, your soul, and——”

“And what?” asked Charles.

“And your plans—the difficulty that you are in for want of money——”

“My *dear* cousin——”

“Hush! hush! do not speak so loud, do not let us wake anybody. Here are the savings of a poor girl who has no wants,” she went on, opening the purse. “You must take them, Charles. This morning I did not know what money was; you have taught me that it is simply a means to an end, that is all. A cousin is almost a brother; surely you may borrow from your sister.”

Eugénie, almost as much a woman as a girl, had not foreseen a refusal, but her cousin was silent.

“Why, are you going to refuse me?” asked Eugénie. The silence was so deep that the beating of her heart was audible. Her pride was wounded by her cousin’s hesitation, but the thought of his dire need came vividly before her, and she fell on her knees.

“I will not rise,” she said, “until you have taken that money. Oh! cousin, say something, for pity’s sake!—so that I may know that you respect me, that you are generous, that——”

This cry, wrung from her by a noble despair, brought tears to Charles’s eyes; he would not let her kneel, she felt

his hot tears on her hands, and sprang to her purse, which she emptied out upon the table.

"Well, then, it is 'Yes,' is it not?" she said, crying for joy. "Do not scruple to take it, cousin; you will be quite rich. That gold will bring you luck, you know. Some day you shall pay it back to me, or, if you like, we will be partners; I will submit to any conditions that you may impose. But you ought not to make so much of this gift."

Charles found words at last.

"Yes, Eugénie, I should have a little soul indeed if I would not take it. But nothing for nothing, confidence for confidence."

"What do you mean?" she asked, startled.

"Listen, dear cousin, I have there——"

He interrupted himself for a moment to show her a square box in a leather case, which stood on the chest of drawers.

"There is something there that is dearer to me than life. That box was a present from my mother. Since this morning I have thought that if she could rise from her tomb she herself would sell the gold that in her tenderness she lavished on this dressing-case, but I cannot do it—it would seem like sacrilege."

Eugénie grasped her cousin's hand tightly in hers at these last words.

"No," he went on after a brief pause, during which they looked at each other with tearful eyes, "I do not want to pull it to pieces, nor to risk taking it with me on my wanderings. I will leave it in your keeping, dear Eugénie. Never did one friend confide a more sacred trust to another; but you shall judge for yourself."

He drew the box from its leather case, opened it, and displayed before his cousin's astonished eyes a dressing-case resplendent with gold—the curious skill of the craftsman had only added to the value of the metal.

"All that you are admiring is nothing," he said, pressing the spring of a secret drawer. "There is something which is worth more than all the world to me," he added sadly.

He took out two portraits, two of Mme. de Mirbel's masterpieces, handsomely set in pearls.

"How lovely she is! Is not this the lady to whom you were writing?"

"No," he said, with a little smile; "that is my mother, and this is my father—your aunt and uncle. Eugénie, I could beg and pray of you on my knees to keep this treasure safe for me. If I should die, and lose your little fortune, the gold will make good your loss; and to you alone can I leave those two portraits, for you alone are worthy to take charge of them, but do not let them pass into any other hands, rather destroy them——"

Eugénie was silent.

"Well, 'it is *Yes*, is it not?'" he said, and there was a winning charm in his manner.

As the last words were spoken, she gave him for the first time such a glance as a loving woman can, a bright glance that reveals a depth of feeling within her. He took her hand and kissed it.

"Angel of purity! what is money henceforward between us two? It is nothing, is it not? but the feeling, which alone gave it worth, will be everything."

"You are like your mother. Was her voice as musical as yours, I wonder?"

"Oh! far more sweet——"

"Yes, for you," she said, lowering her eyelids. "Come, Charles, you must go to bed; I wish it. You are very tired. Good-night."

Her cousin had caught her hand in both of his; she drew it gently away, and went down to her room, her cousin lighting the way. In the doorway of her room they both paused.

"Oh! why am I a ruined man?" he said.

"Pshaw! my father is rich, I believe," she returned.

"My poor child," said Charles, as he set one foot in her room, and propped himself against the wall by the doorway, "if your father had been rich, he would not have let my father die, and you would not be lodged in such a poor place as this; he would live altogether in quite a different style."

"But he has Froidfond."

"And what may Froidfond be worth?"

"I do not know; but there is Noyers too."

"Some miserable farmhouse!"

"He has vineyards and meadows——"

"They are not worth talking about," said Charles scornfully. "If your father had even twenty-four thousand livres a year, do you suppose that you would sleep in a bare, cold room like this?" he added, as he made a step forward with his left foot. "That is where my treasures will be," he went on, nodding towards the old chest, a device by which he tried to conceal his thoughts from her.

"Go," she said, "and try to sleep," and she barred his entrance into an untidy room. Charles drew back; and the cousins bade each other a smiling good-night.

They fell asleep, to dream the same dream; and from that time forward Charles found that there were still roses to be gathered in the world in spite of his mourning. The next morning Mme. Grandet saw her daughter walking with Charles before breakfast. He was still sad and subdued; how, indeed, should he be otherwise than sad? He had been brought very low in his distress; he was gradually finding out how deep the abyss was into which he had fallen, and the thought of the future weighed heavily upon him.

"My father will not be back before dinner," said Eugénie, in reply to an anxious look in her mother's eyes.

The tones of Eugénie's voice had grown strangely sweet; it was easy to see from her face and manner that the cousins had some thought in common. Their souls had rushed together, while perhaps as yet they scarcely knew the power or the nature of this force which was binding them to each other.

Charles sat in the dining-room; no one intruded upon his sorrow. Indeed, the three women had plenty to do. Grandet had gone without any warning, and his work-people were at a standstill. The slater came, the plumber, the bricklayer, and the carpenter followed; so did laborers, tenants, and vine-dressers, some came to pay their dues, and others to receive them, and yet others to make bargains for the repairs which were being done. Mme. Grandet and Eugénie, therefore, were continually going and coming; they had to

listen to interminable histories from laborers and country people.

Everything that came into the house Nanon promptly and securely stowed away in her kitchen. She always waited for her master's instructions as to what should be kept, and what should be sold in the market. The worthy cooper, like many little country squires, was wont to drink his worst wine, and to reserve his spoiled or wind-fallen orchard fruit for home consumption.

Towards five o'clock that evening Grandet came back from Angers. He had made fourteen thousand francs on his gold, and carried a Government certificate bearing interest until the day when it should be transferred into *rentes*. He had left Cornoiller also in Angers to look after the horses, which had been nearly foundered by the night journey, and had given instructions to bring them back leisurely after they had had a thorough rest.

"I have been to Angers, wife," he said; "and I am hungry."

"Have you had nothing to eat since yesterday?" called Nanon from her kitchen.

"Nothing whatever," said the worthy man.

Nanon brought in the soup. Des Grassins came to take his client's instructions just as the family were sitting down to dinner. Grandet had not so much as seen his nephew all this time.

"Go on with your dinner, Grandet," said the banker. "We can have a little chat. Have you heard what gold is fetching in Angers, and that people from Nantes are buying it there? I am going to send some over."

"You need not trouble yourself," answered his worthy client; "they have quite enough there by this time. I don't like you to lose your labor when I can prevent it; we are too good friends for that."

"But gold is at thirteen francs fifty centimes premium."

"Say *was* at a premium."

"How the deuce did you get to know that?"

"I went over to Angers myself last night," Grandet told him in a low voice.

The banker started, and a whispered conversation followed; both des Grassins and Grandet looked at Charles from time to time, and once more a gesture of surprise escaped the banker, doubtless at the point when the old cooper commissioned him to purchase *rentes* to bring in a hundred thousand livres.

"M. Grandet," said des Grassins, addressing Charles, "I am going to Paris, and if there is anything I can do for you——"

"Thank you, sir, there is nothing," Charles replied.

"You must thank him more heartily than that, nephew. This gentleman is going to wind up your father's business and settle with his creditors."

"Then is there any hope of coming to an arrangement?" asked Charles.

"Why, are you not my nephew?" cried the cooper, with a fine assumption of pride. "Our honor is involved; is not your name Grandet?"

Charles rose from his chair, impulsively flung his arms about his uncle, turned pale, and left the room. Eugénie looked at her father with affection and pride in her eyes.

"Well, let us say good-by, my good friend," said Grandet. "I am very much at your service. Try to get round those fellows over yonder."

The two diplomatists shook hands, and the cooper went to the door with his neighbor; he came back to the room again when he had closed the door on des Grassins, flung himself down in his easy-chair, and said to Nanon: "Bring me some cordial."

But he was too much excited to keep still; he rose and looked at old M. de la Bertellière's portrait, and began to "dance a jig," in Nanon's phrase, singing to himself—

"Once in the *Gardes françaises*
I had a grandpapa——"

Nanon, Mme. Grandet, and Eugénie all looked at each other in silent dismay. The vine-grower's ecstasies never boded any good.

The evening was soon over. Old Grandet went off early

to bed, and no one was allowed to stay up after that; when he slept, everyone else must likewise sleep, much as in Poland, in the days of Augustus the Strong, whenever the king drank all his subjects were loyally tipsy. Wherefore, Nanon, Charles, and Eugénie were no less tired than the master of the house; and as for Mme. Grandet, she slept or woke, ate or drank, as her husband bade her. Yet during the two hours allotted to the digestion of his dinner the cooper was more facetious than he had ever been in his life before, and uttered not a few of his favorite aphorisms; one example will serve to plumb the depths of the cooper's mind. When he had finished his cordial, he looked pensively at the glass, and thus delivered himself—

“You have no sooner set your lips to a glass than it is empty! Such is life. You cannot have your cake and eat it too, and you can't turn over your money and keep it in your purse; if you could only do that, life would be too glorious.”

He was not only jocose, he was good-natured, so that when Nanon came in with her spinning-wheel—“You must be tired,” he said; “let the hemp alone.”

“And if I did,” the servant answered, “why, I should have to sit with my hands before me.”

“Poor Nanon! would you like some cordial?”

“Cordial? Oh! I don't say no. Madame makes it much better than the apothecaries do. The stuff they sell is like physic.”

“They spoil the flavor with putting too much sugar in it,” said the good man.

The next morning, at the eight o'clock breakfast, the party seemed, for the first time, almost like one family. Mme. Grandet, Eugénie, and Charles had been drawn together by these troubles, and Nanon herself unconsciously felt with them. As for the old vine-grower, he scarcely noticed his nephew's presence in the house, his greed for gold had been satisfied, and he was very shortly to be quit of this young sprig by the cheap and easy expedient of paying his nephew's traveling expenses as far as Nantes.

Charles and Eugénie meanwhile were free to do what seemed to them good. They were under Mme. Grandet's eyes, and Grandet reposed complete faith in his wife in all matters of conduct and religion. Moreover, he had other things to think of; his meadows were to be drained, and a row of poplars was to be planted along the Loire, and there was all the ordinary winter work at Froidfond and elsewhere; in fact, he was exceedingly busy.

And now began the springtime of love for Eugénie. Since that hour in the night when she had given her gold to her cousin, her heart had followed the gift. They shared a secret between them; they were conscious of this understanding whenever they looked at each other; and this knowledge, that brought them more and more closely together, drew them in a manner out of the current of everyday life. And did not relationship justify a certain tenderness in the voice and kindness in the eyes? Eugénie therefore quietly set herself to work to make her cousin forget his grief in the childish joys of growing love.

For the beginnings of love and the beginnings of life are not unlike. Is not the child soothed by smiles and cradle-songs, and fairy tales of a golden future that lies before him? Above him, too, the bright wings of hope are always spread, and does he not shed tears of joy or of sorrow, wax petulant over trifles and quarrelsome over the pebbles with which he builds a tottering palace, or the flowers that are no sooner gathered than forgotten? Is he not also eager to outstrip time, and to live in the future? Love is the soul's second transformation.

Love and childhood were almost the same thing for Charles and Eugénie; the dawn of love and its childish beginnings were all the sweeter because their hearts were full of gloom; and this love, that from its birth had been enveloped in crape, was in keeping with their homely surroundings in the melancholy old house. As the cousins interchanged a few words by the well in the silent courtyard, or sat out in the little garden towards sunset time, wholly absorbed by the momentous nothings that each said to each, or wrapped in the stillness that always brooded over the space

between the ramparts and the house, Charles learned to think of love as something sacred. Hitherto, with his great lady, his "dear Annette," he had experienced little but its perils and storms; but that episode in Paris was over, with its coquetry and passion, its vanity and emptiness, and he turned to this love in its purity and truth.

He came to feel a certain fondness for the old house, and their way of life no longer seemed absurd to him. He would come downstairs early in the morning so as to snatch a few words with Eugénie before her father gave out the stores; and when the sound of Grandet's heavy footstep echoed on the staircase, he fled into the garden. Even Eugénie's mother did not know of this morning tryst of theirs, and Nanon made as though she did not see it; it was a small piece of audacity that gave the keen relish of a stolen pleasure to their innocent love. Then when breakfast was over, and the elder Grandet had gone to see after his business and his improvements, Charles sat in the gray parlor between the mother and daughter, finding a pleasure unknown before in holding skeins of thread for them to wind, in listening to their talk, and watching them sew. There was something that appealed to him strongly in the almost monastic simplicity of the life, which had led him to discover the nobleness of the natures of these two unworldly women. He had not believed that such lives as these were possible in France; in Germany he admitted that old-world manners lingered still, but in France they were only to be found in fiction and in Auguste Lafontaine's novels. It was not long before Eugénie became an embodiment of his ideal, Goethe's Marguerite without her error.

Day after day, in short, the poor girl hung on his words and looks, and drifted farther along the stream of love. He snatched at every happiness as some swimmer might catch at an overhanging willow branch, that so he might reach the bank and rest there for a little while.

Was not the time of parting very near now? The shadow of that parting seemed to fall across the brightest hours of those days that fled so fast; and not one of them went by

but something happened to remind her how soon it would be upon them.

For instance, three days after des Grassins had started for Paris, Grandet had taken Charles before a magistrate with the funereal solemnity with which such acts are performed by provincials, and in the presence of that functionary the young man had had to sign a declaration that he renounced all claim to his father's property. Dreadful repudiation! An impiety amounting to apostasy! He went to M. Cruchot to procure two powers of attorney, one for des Grassins, the other for the friend who was commissioned to sell his own personal effects. There were also some necessary formalities in connection with his passport; and finally, on the arrival of the plain suit of mourning which Charles had ordered from Paris, he sent for a clothier in Saumur, and disposed of his now useless wardrobe. This transaction was peculiarly pleasing to old Grandet.

"Ah! *Now* you look like a man who is ready to set out, and means to make his way in the world," he said, as he saw his nephew in a plain, black overcoat of rough cloth. "Good, very good!"

"I beg you to believe, sir," Charles replied, "that I shall face my position with proper spirit."

"What does this mean?" asked his worthy relative; there was an eager look in the good man's eyes at the sight of a handful of gold which Charles held out to him.

"I have gathered together my studs and rings and everything of any value that I have; I am not likely to want them now; but I know of nobody in Saumur, and this morning I thought I would ask you——"

"To buy it?" Grandet broke in upon him.

"No, uncle, to give me the name of some honest man who——"

"Give it to me, nephew; I will take it upstairs and find out what it is worth, and let you know the value to a centime. *Jeweler's gold*," he commented, after an examination of a long chain, "*jeweler's gold*, eighteen to nineteen carats, I should say."

The worthy soul held out his huge hand for it, and carried off the whole collection.

"Cousin Eugénie," said Charles, "permit me to offer you these two clasps; you might use them to fasten ribbons round your wrists, that sort of bracelet is all the rage just now."

"I do not hesitate to take it, cousin," she said, with a look of intelligence.

"And, aunt, this is my mother's thimble; I have treasured it up till now in my dressing-case," and he gave a pretty gold thimble to Mme. Grandet, who for the past ten years had longed for one.

"It is impossible to thank you in words, dear nephew," said the old mother, as her eyes filled with tears. "But morning and evening I shall repeat the prayer for travelers, and pray most fervently for you. If anything should happen to me, Eugénie shall take care of it for you."

"It is worth nine hundred and eighty-nine francs seventy-five centimes, nephew," said Grandet, as he came in at the door. "But to save you the trouble of selling it, I will let you have the money in livres."

This expression "in livres" means, in the districts along the Loire, that a crown of six livres is to be considered worth six francs, without deduction.

"I did not venture to suggest such a thing," Charles answered, "but I shrank from hawking my trinkets about in the town where you are living. Dirty linen ought not to be washed in public, as Napoleon used to say. Thank you for obliging me."

Grandet scratched his ear, and there was a moment's silence in the room.

"And, dear uncle," Charles went on, somewhat nervously, and as though he feared to wound his uncle's susceptibilities, "my cousin and aunt have consented to receive trifling mementoes from me; will you not in your turn accept these sleeve-links, which are useless to me now; they may perhaps recall to your memory a poor boy, in a far-off country, whose thoughts will certainly often turn to those who are all that remain to him now of his family."

“Oh! my boy, my boy, you must not strip yourself like that for us——”

“What have you there, wife?” said the cooper, turning eagerly towards her: “Ah! a gold thimble? And you, little girl? Diamond clasps; what next! Come, I will accept your studs, my boy,” he continued, squeezing Charles’s hand. “But—you must let me pay—your—yes, your passage out to the Indies. Yes, I mean to pay your passage. Besides, my boy, when I estimated your jewelry I only took it at its value as metal, you see, without reckoning the workmanship, and it may be worth a trifle more on that account. So that is settled. I will pay you fifteen hundred francs—in livres; Cruchot will lend it me, for I have not a brass farthing in the house; unless Perrotet, who is getting behind-hand with his dues, will pay me in coin. There! there! I will go and see about it,” and he took up his hat, put on his gloves, and went forthwith.

“Then you are going?” said Eugénie, with sad, admiring eyes.

“I cannot help myself,” he answered, with his head bent down.

For several days Charles looked, spoke, and behaved like a man who is in deep trouble, but who feels the weight of such heavy obligations, that his misfortunes only brace him for greater effort. He had ceased to pity himself; he had become a man. Never had Eugénie augured better of her cousin’s character than she did on the day when she watched him come downstairs in his plain, black mourning suit, which set off his pale, sad face to such advantage. The two women had also gone into mourning, and went with Charles to the *requiem* Mass celebrated in the parish church for the soul of the late Guillaume Grandet.

Charles received letters from Paris as they took the mid-day meal; he opened and read them.

“Well, cousin,” said Eugénie, in a low voice, “are your affairs going on satisfactorily?”

“Never put question of that sort, my girl,” remarked Grandet. “I never talk to you about my affairs, and why

the devil should you meddle in your cousin's? Just let the boy alone."

"Oh! my dear uncle, I have no secrets of any sort," said Charles.

"Tut, tut, tut. You will find out that you must bridle your tongue in business, nephew."

When the two lovers were alone in the garden, Charles drew Eugénie to the old bench under the walnut tree where they so often sat of late.

"I felt sure of Alphonse, and I was right," he said; "he has done wonders, and has settled my affairs prudently and loyally. All my debts in Paris are paid, my furniture sold well, and he tells me that he has acted on the advice of an old sea captain who had made the voyage to the Indies, and has invested the surplus money in ornaments and odds and ends for which there is a great demand out there. He has sent my packages to Nantes, where an East Indiaman is taking freight for Java, and so, Eugénie, in five days we must bid each other farewell, for a long while at any rate, and perhaps forever. My trading venture and the ten thousand francs which two of my friends have sent me are a very poor start; I cannot expect to return for many years. Dear cousin, let us not consider ourselves bound in any way; I may die, and very likely some good opportunity for settling yourself——"

"You love me?" she asked.

"Oh! yes, indeed," he replied, with an earnestness of manner that betokened a like earnestness in his feelings.

"Then I will wait for you, Charles. *Dieu!* my father is looking out of his window," she exclaimed, evading her cousin, who had drawn closer to embrace her.

She fled to the archway; and seeing that Charles followed her thither, she retreated farther, flung back the folding door at the foot of the staircase, and with no very clear idea, save that of flight, she rushed towards the darkest corner of the passage, outside Nanon's sleeping hole; and there Charles, who was close beside her, grasped both hands in his and pressed her to his heart; his arms went round her waist, Eugénie resisted no longer, and leaning against

her lover she received and gave the purest, sweetest, and most perfect of all kisses.

"Dear Eugénie, a cousin is better than a brother; he can marry you," said Charles.

"Amen, so be it!" cried Nanon, opening the door behind them, and emerging from her den. Her voice startled the two lovers, who fled into the dining-room, where Eugénie took up her sewing, and Charles seized on Mme. Grandet's prayer-book, opened it at the litanies of the Virgin, and began to read industriously.

"Why!" said Nanon, "so we are all saying our prayers!"

As soon as Charles fixed the day for his departure, Grandet bustled about and affected to take the greatest interest in the whole matter. He was liberal with advice, and with anything else that cost him nothing, first seeking out a packer for Charles, and then, saying that the man wanted too much for his cases, setting to work with all his might to make them himself, using odd planks for the purpose. He was up betimes every morning planing, fitting, nailing deal boards together, squaring and shaping; and, in fact, he made some strong cases, packed all Charles's property in them, and undertook to send them by steamer down the Loire to Nantes in time to go by the merchant ship, and to insure them during the voyage.

Since that kiss given and taken in the passage, the hours sped with terrible rapidity for Eugénie. At times she thought of following her cousin; for of all ties that bind one human being to another, this passion of love is the closest and strongest, and those who know this, and know how every day shortens love's allotted span, and how not time alone but age and mortal sickness and all the untoward accidents of life combine to menace it—these will know the agony that Eugénie suffered. She shed many tears as she walked up and down the little garden; it had grown so narrow for her now; the courtyard, the old house, and the town had all grown narrow, and her thoughts fared forth already across vast spaces of sea.

It was the day before the day of departure. That morn-

ing, while Grandet and Nanon were out of the house, the precious casket that held the two portraits was solemnly deposited in Eugénie's chest, beside the now empty velvet bag in the only drawer that could be locked, an installation which was not affected without many tears and kisses. When Eugénie locked the drawer and hid the key in her bosom, she had not the courage to forbid the kiss by which Charles sealed the act.

"The key shall always stay there, dear."

"Ah! well, my heart will always be there with it too."

"Oh! Charles, you should not say that," she said a little reproachfully.

"Are we not married?" he replied. "I have your word; take mine."

"Thine forever!" they said together, and repeated it a second time. No holier vow was ever made on earth; for Charles's love had received a moment's consecration in the presence of Eugénie's simple sincerity.

It was a melancholy group round the breakfast-table next morning. Even Nanon herself, in spite of Charles's gift of a new gown and a gilt cross, had a tear in her eye; but she was free to express her feelings, and did so.

"Oh! that poor, delicate young gentleman who is going to sea," was the burden of her discourse.

At half-past ten the whole family left the house to see Charles start for Nantes in the diligence. Nanon had let the dog loose and locked the door, and meant to carry Charles's hand-bag. Every shopkeeper in the ancient street was in the doorway to watch the little procession pass. M. Cruchot joined them in the market-place.

"Eugénie," whispered her mother, "mind you do not cry!"

They reached the gateway of the inn, and there Grandet kissed Charles on both cheeks. "Well! nephew," he said, "set out poor and come back rich; you leave your father's honor in safe-keeping. I—Grandet—will answer to you for that; you will only have to do your part——"

“Oh! uncle, this sweetens the bitterness of parting. Is not this the greatest gift you could possibly give me?”

Charles had broken in upon the old cooper's remarks before he quite understood their drift; he put his arms round his uncle's neck, and let fall tears of gratitude on the vine-grower's sunburned cheeks; Eugénie clasped her cousin's hand in one of hers and her father's in the other, and held them tightly. Only the notary smiled to himself; he alone understood the worthy man, and he could not help admiring his astute cunning. The four Saumurois and a little group of onlookers hung about the diligence till the last moment; and looked after it until it disappeared across the bridge, and the sound of the wheels grew faint and distant.

“A good riddance!” said the cooper.

Luckily, no one but M. Cruchot heard this ejaculation; Eugénie and her mother had walked along the quay to a point of view whence they could still see the diligence, and stood there waving their handkerchiefs and watching Charles's answering signal till he was out of sight; then Eugénie turned.

“Oh! mother, mother, if I had God's power for one moment,” she said.

To save further interruption to the course of the story, it is necessary to glance a little ahead, and give a brief account of the course of events in Paris, of Grandet's calculations, and the action taken by his worthy lieutenant the banker in the matter of Guillaume Grandet's affairs. A month after des Grassins had gone, Grandet received a certificate for a hundred thousand livres per annum of *rentes*, purchased at eighty francs. No information was ever forthcoming as to how and when the actual coin had been paid, or the receipt taken, which in due course had been exchanged for the certificate. The inventory and statement of his affairs which the miser left at his death threw no light upon the mystery, and Cruchot fancied that in some way or other Nanon must have been the unconscious instrument employed; for about that time the faithful serving-maid was away from home for four or five days, ostensibly to see after matters at Froidfond, as if its worthy owner were likely to

forget anything there that required looking after! As for Guillaume Grandet's creditors, everything had happened as the cooper had intended and foreseen.

At the Bank of France (as everybody knows) they keep accurate lists of all the great fortunes in Paris or in the departments. The names of des Grassins and of Félix Grandet of Saumur were duly to be found inscribed therein; indeed, they shone conspicuous there as well-known names in the business world, as men who were not only financially sound, but owners of broad acres unencumbered by mortgages. And now it was said that des Grassins of Saumur had come to Paris with intent to call a meeting of the creditors of the firm of Guillaume Grandet; the shade of the wine merchant was to be spared the disgrace of protested bills. The seals were broken in the presence of the creditors, and the family notary proceeded to make out an inventory in due form.

Before very long, in fact, des Grassins called a meeting of the creditors, who with one voice appointed the banker of Saumur as trustee conjointly with François Keller, the head of a large business house, and one of the principal creditors, empowering them to take such measures as they thought fit, in order to save the family name (and the bills) from being dishonored. The fact that des Grassins was acting as his agent produced a hopeful tone in the meeting, and things went smoothly from the first; the banker did not find a single dissentient voice. No one thought of passing his bill to his profit and loss account, and each one said to himself—

“Grandet of Saumur is going to pay!”

Six months went by. The Parisian merchants had withdrawn the bills from circulation, and had consigned them to the depths of their portfolios. The cooper had gained his first point. Nine months after the first meeting the two trustees paid the creditors a dividend of forty-seven per cent. This sum had been raised by the sale of the late Guillaume Grandet's property, goods, chattels and general effects; the most scrupulous integrity characterized these proceedings; indeed, the whole affair was conducted with the

most conscientious honesty, and the delighted creditors fell to admiring Grandet's wonderful, indubitable, and high-minded probity. When these praises had duly circulated for a sufficient length of time, the creditors began to ask themselves when the remainder of their money would be forthcoming, and bethought them of collectively writing a letter to Grandet.

"Here we are!" was the old cooper's comment, as he flung the letter in the fire. "Patience, patience, my dear friends."

By way of a reply to the propositions contained in the letter, Grandet of Saumur required them to deposit with a notary all the bills and claims against the estate of his deceased brother, accompanying each with receipts for the payments already made. The accounts were to be audited, and the exact condition of affairs was to be ascertained. Innumerable difficulties were cleared away by this notion of the deposit.

A creditor, generally speaking, is a sort of maniac; there is no saying what a creditor will do. One day he is in a hurry to bring the thing to an end, the next he is all for fire and sword, a little later and he is sweetness and benignity itself. To-day, very probably, his wife is in a good humor, his youngest hope has just cut a tooth, everything is going on comfortably at home, he has no mind to abate his claims one jot; but to-morrow comes and it rains, and he cannot go out; he feels low in his mind, and agrees hastily to anything and everything that is likely to settle the affair; the next morning brings counsel; he requires a guarantee, and by the end of the month he talks about an execution, the inhuman, bloodthirsty wretch! The creditor is not unlike that common or house sparrow on whose tail small children are encouraged to try to put a grain of salt—a pleasing simile which a creditor may twist to his own uses, and apply to his bills, from which he fondly hopes to derive some benefit at last. Grandet had observed these atmospheric variations among creditors; and his forecasts in the present case were correct, his brother's creditors were behaving in every respect exactly as he wished. Some waxed wroth, and

flatly declined to have anything to do with the deposit, or to give up the vouchers.

"Good!" said Grandet; "that is all right!" He rubbed his hands as he read the letters which des Grassins wrote to him on the subject.

Yet others refused to consent to the aforesaid deposit unless their position was clearly defined in the first place; it was to be made without prejudice, and they reserved the right to declare the estate bankrupt should they deem it advisable. This opened a fresh correspondence, and occasioned a farther delay, after which Grandet finally agreed to all the conditions, and as a consequence the more tractable creditors brought the recalcitrant to hear reason, and the deposit was made, not, however, without some grumbling.

"That old fellow is laughing in his sleeve at you and us too," said they to des Grassins.

Twenty-three months after Guillaume Grandet's death, many of the merchants had forgotten all about their claims in the course of events in a business life in Paris, or they only thought of them to say to themselves—

"It begins to look as though the forty-seven per cent. is about all I shall get out of that business."

The cooper had reckoned on the aid of time, who, as he was wont to say, is a good fellow. By the end of the third year des Grassins wrote to Grandet saying that he had induced most of the creditors to give up their bills, and that the amount now owing was only about ten per cent. of the outstanding two million four hundred thousand francs. Grandet replied that there yet remained the notary and the stockbroker, whose failures had been the death of his brother; *they* were still alive. They might be solvent again by this time, and proceedings ought to be taken against them; something might be recovered in this way which would still farther reduce the sum-total of the deficit.

When the fourth year drew to a close the deficit had been duly brought down to the sum of twelve hundred thousand francs; the limit appeared to have been reached. Six months farther were spent in parleyings between the trustees and the creditors, and between Grandet and the trustees. In

short, strong pressure being brought to bear upon Grandet of Saumur, he announced, somewhere about the ninth month of the same year, that his nephew, who had made a fortune in the East Indies, had signified his intention of settling in full all claims on his father's estate; and that meantime he could not take it upon himself to act, nor to defraud the creditors by winding up the affair before he had consulted his nephew; he added that he had written to him, and was now awaiting an answer.

The middle of the fifth year had been reached, and still the creditors were held in check by the magic words *in full*, let fall judiciously from time to time by the sublime cooper, who was laughing at them in his sleeve; "those PARISIANS," he would say to himself, with a mild oath, and a cunning smile would steal across his features.

In fact, a martyrdom unknown to the calendars of commerce was in store for the creditors. When next they appear in the course of this story, they will be found in exactly the same position that they were in now when Grandet had done with them. Consols went up to a hundred and fifteen, old Grandet sold out, and received from Paris about two million four hundred thousand francs in gold, which went into his wooden kegs to keep company with the six hundred thousand francs of interest which his investment had brought in.

Des Grassins stayed on in Paris, and for the following reasons. In the first place, he had been appointed a deputy; and in the second, he, the father of a family, bored by the exceeding dullness of existence in Saumur, was smitten with the charms of Mlle. Florine, one of the prettiest actresses of the Théâtre de Madame, and there was a recrudescence of the quartermaster in the banker. It is useless to discuss his conduct; at Saumur it was pronounced to be profoundly immoral. It was very lucky for his wife that she had brains enough to carry on the concern at Saumur in her own name, and could extricate the remains of her fortune, which had suffered not a little from M. des Grassins's extravagance and folly. But the quasi-widow was in a false position, and the Cruchotins did all that in them lay to make matters worse; she had to give up all hope of a match between her

son and Eugénie Grandet, and married her daughter very badly. Adolphe des Grassins went to join his father in Paris, and there acquired, so it was said, an unenviable reputation. The triumph of the Cruchotins was complete.

"Your husband has taken leave of his senses," Grandet took occasion to remark as he accommodated Mme. des Grassins with a loan (on good security). "I am very sorry for you; you are a nice little woman."

"Ah!" sighed the poor lady, "who could have believed that day when he set out for Paris to see after that business of yours that he was hurrying to his own ruin?"

"Heaven is my witness, madame, that to the very last I did all I could to prevent him, and M. le Président was dying to go; but we know now why your husband was so set upon it."

Clearly, therefore, Grandet lay under no obligation to des Grassins.

In every situation a woman is bound to suffer in many ways that a man does not, and to feel her troubles more acutely than he can; for a man's vigor and energy are constantly brought into play; he acts and thinks, comes and goes, busies himself in the present, and looks to the future for consolation. This was what Charles was doing. But a woman cannot help herself—hers is a passive part; she is left face to face with her trouble, and has nothing to divert her mind from it; she sounds the depths of the abyss of sorrow, and its dark places are filled with her prayers and tears. So it was with Eugénie. She was beginning to understand that the web of a woman's life will always be woven of love and sorrow and hope and fear and self-sacrifice; hers was to be a woman's lot in all things without a woman's consolations, and her moments of happiness (to make use of Bossuet's wonderful illustration) were to be like the scattered nails driven into the wall, when all collected together they scarcely filled the hollow of the hand. Troubles seldom keep us waiting for them, and for Eugénie they were gathering thick and fast.

The day after Charles had gone, the Grandet household

fell back into the old ways of life; there was no difference for anyone but Eugénie—for her the house had grown very empty all of a sudden. Charles's room should remain just as he had left it; Mme. Grandet and Nanon lent themselves to this whim of hers, willingly maintained the *statu quo*, and said nothing to her father.

"Who knows?" Eugénie said. "He may come back to us sooner than we think."

"Ah! I wish I could see him here again," replied Nanon. "I could get on with him well enough! He was very nice, and an excellent gentleman; and he was pretty-like, his hair curled over his head just like a girl's."

Eugénie gazed at Nanon.

"Holy Virgin! mademoiselle, with such eyes, you are like to lose your soul. You shouldn't look at people in that way."

From that day Mlle. Grandet's beauty took a new character. The grave thoughts of love that slowly enveloped her soul, the dignity of a woman who is beloved, gave to her face the sort of radiance that early painters expressed by the aureole. Before her cousin came into her life, Eugénie might have been compared to the Virgin as yet unconscious of her destiny; and now that he had passed out of it, she seemed like the Virgin Mother; she, too, bore love in her heart. Spanish art has depicted these two Marys, so different one from the other—Christianity, with its many symbols, knows no more glorious types than these.

The day after Charles had left them, Eugénie went to Mass (as she had resolved to do daily), and on her way back bought a map of the world from the only bookseller in the town. This she pinned to the wall beside her glass, so that she might follow the course of her cousin's voyage to the Indies; and night and morning might be beside him for a little while on that far-off vessel, and see him and ask all the endless questions she longed to ask.

"Are you well? Are you not sad? Am I in your thoughts when you see the star that you told me about? You made me see how beautiful it was."

In the morning she used to sit like one in a dream under the great walnut tree, on the old gray, lichen-covered, worm-eaten bench where they had talked so kindly and so foolishly, where they had built such fair castles in the air in which to live. She thought of the future as she watched the little strip of sky shut in by the high walls on every side, then her eyes wandered over the old buttressed wall and the roof—Charles's room lay beneath it. In short, this solitary persistent love mingling with all her thoughts became the substance, or, as our forefathers would have said, the "staff" of her life.

If Grandet's self-styled friends came in of an evening, she would seem to be in high spirits, but the liveliness was only assumed; she used to talk about Charles with her mother and Nanon the whole morning through, and Nanon—who was of the opinion that without faltering in her duty to her master she might yet feel for her young mistress's troubles—Nanon spoke on this wise—

"If I had had a sweetheart, I would have—I would have gone with him to hell. I would have—well, then, I would just have laid down my life for him, but—no such chance! I shall die without knowing what it is to love. Would you believe it, mamselle, there is that old Cornoiller, who is a good man all the same, dangling about after my savings, just like the others who come here paying court to you and sniffing after the master's money. I see through it; I may be as big as a haystack, but I am as sharp as a needle yet. Well! and yet do you know, mamselle, it may not be love, but I rather like it."

In this way two months went by. The secret that bound the three women so closely together had brought a new interest into the household life hitherto so monotonous. For them Charles still dwelt in the house, and came and went beneath the old gray rafters of the parlor. Every morning and evening Eugénie opened the dressing-case and looked at her aunt's portrait. Her mother, suddenly coming into her room one Sunday morning, found her absorbed in tracing out a likeness to Charles in the lady of the miniature, and Mme. Grandet learned for the first time a terrible secret,

how that Eugénie had parted with her treasures and had taken the case in exchange.

"You have let him have it all!" cried the terrified mother. "What will you say to your father on New Year's Day when he asks to see your gold?"

Eugénie's eyes were set in a fixed stare; the horror of this thought so filled the women that half the morning went by, and they were distressed to find themselves too late for high Mass, and were only in time for the military Mass. The year 1819 was almost over; there were only three more days left. In three days a terrible drama would begin, a drama undignified by poison, dagger, or bloodshed, but fate dealt scarcely more cruelly with the princely house of Atreus than with the actors in this bourgeois tragedy.

"What is to become of us?" said Mme. Grandet, laying down her knitting on her knee.

Poor mother! all the events of the past two months had sadly hindered the knitting, the woolen cuffs for winter wear were not finished yet, a homely and apparently insignificant fact which was to work trouble enough for her. For want of the warm cuffs she caught a chill after a violent perspiration brought on by one of her husband's fearful outbursts of rage.

"My poor child, I have been thinking that if you had only told me about this, we should have had time to write to M. des Grassins in Paris. He might have managed to send us some gold pieces like those of yours; and although Grandet knows the look of them so well, still perhaps——"

"But where could we have found so much money?"

"I would have raised it on my property. Besides, M. des Grassins would have befriended us——"

"There is not time enough now," faltered Eugénie in a smothered voice. "To-morrow morning we shall have to go to his room to wish him a happy New Year, shall we not?"

"Oh! Eugénie, why not go and see the Cruchots about it?"

"No, no, that would be putting ourselves in their power; I should be entirely in their hands then. Besides, I have made up my mind. I have acted quite rightly, and I repent

of nothing; God will protect me. May His holy will be done! Ah! if you had read that letter, mother, you would have thought of nothing but him."

The next morning, January 1, 1820, the mother and daughter were in an agony of distress that they could not hide; sheer terror suggested the simple expedient of omitting the solemn visit to Grandet's room. The bitter weather served as an excuse; the winter of 1819-20 was the coldest that had been known for years, and snow lay deep on the roofs.

Mme. Grandet called to her husband as soon as she heard him stirring, "Grandet, just let Nanon light a bit of fire in here for me, the air is so sharp that I am shivering under the bedclothes, and at my time of life I must take care of myself. And then," she went on after a little pause, "Eugénie shall come in here to dress. The poor girl may do herself a mischief if she dresses in her own room in such cold. We will come downstairs into the sitting-room and wish you a happy New Year there by the fire."

"Tut, tut, tut, what a tongue! What a way to begin the year, Mme. Grandet! You have never said so much in your life before. You have not had a sop of bread in wine, I suppose?"

There was a moment's pause. Doubtless his wife's proposal suited his notions, for he said, "Very well, I will do as you wish, Mme. Grandet. You really are a good sort of woman, it would be a pity for you to expire before you are due, though, as a rule, the La Bertellières make old bones, don't they, hey?" he cried, after a pause. "Well, their money has fallen in at last; I forgive them," and he coughed.

"You are in spirits this morning," said the poor wife.

"I always am in spirits.

"Hey! hey! cooper gay,
Mend your tub and take your pay."

He had quite finished dressing, and came into his wife's room. "Yes, in the name of goodness! it is a mighty

hard frost, all the same. We shall have a good breakfast to-day, wife. Des Grassins has sent me a *pâté de foies gras*, truffled! I am going round to the coach office to see after it. He should have sent a double napoleon for Eugénie along with it," said the cooper, coming closer, and lowering his voice. "I have no gold, I certainly had a few old coins still left, I may tell you that in confidence, but I had to let them go in the course of business," and by way of celebrating the first day of the year he kissed his wife on the forehead.

"Eugénie," cried the kind mother, as soon as Grandet had gone, "I don't know which side of the bed your father got out on, but he is in a good humor this morning. Pshaw! we shall pull through."

"What can have come over the master?" cried Nanon as she came into the room to light the fire. "First of all, he says, 'Good-morning, great stupid, a happy New Year! Go upstairs and light a fire in my wife's room; she is feeling cold.' I thought I must be off my head when I saw him holding out his hand with a six-franc piece in it that hadn't been clipped a bit! There! madame, only look at it! Oh! he is a worthy man, all the same—he is a good man, he is. There are some as get harder-hearted the older they grow; but he turns sweeter, like your cordial that improves with keeping. He is a very good and a very excellent man——"

Grandet's speculation had been completely successful; this was the cause of his high spirits. M. des Grassins—after deducting various amounts which the cooper owed him, partly for discounting Dutch bills to the amount of a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and partly for advances of money for the purchase of a hundred thousand livres worth of consols—M. des Grassins was sending him, by diligence, thirty thousand francs in crowns, the remainder (after the aforesaid deductions had been made) of the cooper's half-yearly dividends, and informed Grandet that consols were steadily rising. They stood at eighty-nine at the present moment, and well-known capitalists were buying for the next account at the end of January at ninety-two. In two

months Grandet had made twelve per cent. on his capital; he had straightened his accounts; and henceforward he would receive fifty thousand francs every half-year, clear of taxes or any outgoing expenses. In short, he had grasped the theory of consols (a class of investment of which the provincial mind is exceedingly shy), and, looking ahead, he beheld himself the master of six millions of francs in five years' time—six millions, which would go on accumulating with scarcely any trouble on his part—six millions of francs! And there was the value of his landed property to add to this; he saw himself in a fair way to build up a colossal fortune. The six francs given to Nanon were perhaps in reality the payment for an immense service which the girl had unwittingly done her master.

“Oho! what can M. Grandet be after? He is running as if there were a fire somewhere,” the shopkeepers said to each other as they took down their shutters that New Year's morning.

A little later when they saw him coming back from the quay followed by a porter from the coach office, who was wheeling a barrow piled up with little bags full of something:

“Ah!” said they, “water always makes for the river, the old boy was hurrying after his crowns.”

“They flow in on him from Paris, and Froidfond, and Holland,” said one.

“He will buy Saumur before he has done,” cried another.

“He does not care a rap for the cold; he is always looking after his business,” said a woman to her husband.

“Hi! M. Grandet! if you have more of that than you know what to do with, I can help you to get rid of some of it.”

“Eh! they are only coppers,” said the vine-grower.

“Silver, he means,” said the porter in a low voice.

“Keep a still tongue in your head, if you want me to bear you in mind,” said M. Grandet as he opened the door.

“Oh! the old fox, I thought he was deaf,” said the porter

to himself, "but it looks as though he could hear well enough in cold weather."

"Here is a franc for a New Year's gift, and keep quiet about this. Off with you! Nanon will bring back the barrow. Nanon!" cried Grandet, "are the women-folk gone to Mass?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come, look sharp, and lend a hand here, then," he cried, and loaded her with the bags. In another minute the crowns were safely transferred to his room, where he locked himself in.

"Thump on the wall when breakfast is ready," he called through the door, and take the wheelbarrow back to the coach office."

It was ten o'clock before the family breakfasted.

"Your father will not ask to see your gold now," said Mme. Grandet as they came back from Mass; "and if he does, you can shiver and say it is too cold to go upstairs for it. We shall have time to make up the money again before your birthday——"

Grandet came down the stairs with his head full of schemes for transforming the five-franc pieces just received from Paris into gold coin, which should be neither clipped nor light weight. He thought of his admirably timed investment in Government stock, and made up his mind that he would continue to put his money into consols until they rose to a hundred francs. Such meditations as these boded ill for Eugénie. As soon as he came in the two women wished him a prosperous New Year, each in her own way; Mme. Grandet was grave and ceremonious, but his daughter put her arms round his neck and kissed him. "Aha! child," he said, kissing her on both cheeks, "I am thinking and working for you, you see!—I want you to be happy, and if you are to be happy, you must have money; for you won't get anything without it. Look! here is a brand new napoleon, I sent to Paris on purpose for it. In the name of goodness! there is not a speck of gold in the house, except yours, you are the one who has the gold. Let me see your gold, little girl."

"Bah! it is too cold, let us have breakfast," Eugénie answered.

"Well, then, after breakfast we will have a look at it, eh? It will be good for our digestions. That great des Grassins sent us this, all the same," he went on, "so get your breakfast, children, for it costs us nothing. Des Grassins is going on nicely; I am pleased with him; the old fish is doing Charles a service, and all free gratis. Really, he is managing poor dear Grandet's affairs very cleverly. Ououh! ououh!" he cried, with his mouth full, "this is good! Eat away, wife, there is enough here to last us for two days at least."

"I am not hungry. I am very poorly, you know that very well."

"Oh! Ah! but you have a sound constitution; you are a la Bertellière, and you can put away a great deal without any fear of damaging yourself. You may be a trifle sallow, but I have a liking for yellow myself."

The prisoner shrinking from a public and ignominious death could not well await his doom with a more sickening dread than Mme. Grandet and Eugénie felt as they foresaw the end of breakfast and the inevitable sequel. The more boisterously the cooper talked and ate, the lower sank their spirits; but to the girl, in this crisis, a certain support was not lacking, love was strong within her. "I would die a thousand deaths," she thought, "for him, for him!"

She looked at her mother, and courage and defiance shone in her eyes.

By eleven o'clock they had finished breakfast. "Clear everything away," Grandet told Nanon, "but leave us the table. We can look over your little treasure more comfortably so," he said with his eyes on Eugénie. "*Little*, said I? 'Tis not so small, though, upon my word. Your coins altogether are actually worth five thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine francs, then with forty more this morning, that makes six thousand francs all but one. Well, I will give you another franc to make up the sum, because, you see, little girl—Well! now, why are you listening to us! Just take yourself off, Nanon, and set about your work!"

Nanon vanished.

"Listen, Eugénie, you must let me have your gold. You will not refuse to let your papa have it? Eh, little daughter?"

Neither of the women spoke.

"I myself have no gold left. I had some once, but I have none now. I will give you six thousand francs in silver for it, and you shall invest it; I will show you how. There is really no need to think of a *dozen*. When you are married (which will be before very long) I will find a husband for you who will give you the handsomest *dozen* that has ever been heard of hereabouts. There is a splendid opportunity just now; you can invest your six thousand francs in Government stock, and every six months, when dividends are due, you will have about two hundred francs coming in, all clear of taxes, and no repairs to pay for, and no frosts nor hail nor bad seasons, none of all the tiresome drawbacks you have to lay your account with if you put your money into land. You don't like to part with your gold, eh? Is that it, little girl? Never mind, let me have it all the same. I will look out for gold coins for you, ducats from Holland, and genovines and Portuguese moïdores and rupees, the Mogul's rupees; and what with the coins I shall give you on your birthday and so forth, you will have half your little hoard again in three years' time, beside the six thousand francs in the Funds. What do you say, little girl? Look up, child! There! there! bring it here, my pet. You owe me a good kiss for telling you business secrets and mysteries of the life and death of five-franc pieces. Five-franc pieces! Yes, indeed, the coins live and gad about just like men do; they go and come and sweat and multiply."

Eugénie rose and made a few steps towards the door; then she turned abruptly, looked her father full in the face, and said:

"All *my* gold is gone; I have none left."

"All your gold is gone!" echoed Grandet, starting up, as a horse might rear when the cannon thunders not ten paces from him.

"Yes, it is all gone."

"Eugénie! you are dreaming!"

"No."

"By my father's pruning-hook!" Whenever the cooper swore in this fashion, the floors and ceilings trembled.

"Lord have mercy!" cried Nanon; "how white the mistress is!"

"Grandet! you will kill me with your angry fits," said the poor wife.

"Tut, tut, tut; none of your family ever die. Now, Eugénie! what have you done with your money?" he burst out as he turned upon her.

The girl was on her knees beside Mme. Grandet.

"Look! sir," she said, "my mother is very ill—do not kill her."

Grandet was alarmed; his wife's dark, sallow complexion had grown so white.

"Nanon, come and help me up to bed," she said in a feeble voice. "This is killing me——"

Nanon gave an arm to her mistress, and Eugénie supported her on the other side; but it was only with the greatest difficulty that they reached her room, for the poor mother's strength completely failed her, and she stumbled at every step. Grandet was left alone in the parlor. After a while, however, he came part of the way upstairs, and called out:

"Eugénie! Come down again as soon as your mother is in bed."

"Yes, father."

In no long time she returned to him, after comforting her mother as best she could.

"Now, my daughter," Grandet addressed her, "you will tell me where your money is."

"If I am not perfectly free to do as I like with your presents, father, please take them back again," said Eugénie coldly. She went to the chimney-piece for the napoleon, and gave it to her father.

Grandet pounced upon it, and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

"I will never give you anything again, I know," he said, pointing his thumb at her. "You look down on your father, do you? You have no confidence in him? Do you know what a father is? If he is not everything to you, he is nothing. Now; where is your gold?"

"I do respect you and love you, father, in spite of your anger; but I would very humbly point out to you that I am twenty-one years old. You have told me that I am of age often enough for me to know it. I have done as I liked with my money, and rest assured that it is in good hands——"

"Whose?"

"That is an inviolable secret," she said. "Have you not your secrets?"

"Am I not the head of my family? May I not be allowed to have my own business affairs?"

"This is my own affair."

"It must be something very unsatisfactory, Mlle. Grandet, if you cannot tell your own father about it."

"It is perfectly satisfactory, and I cannot tell my father about it."

"Tell me, at any rate, when you parted with your gold."

Eugénie shook her head.

"You still had it on your birthday, hadn't you, eh?"

But if greed had made her father crafty, love had taught Eugénie to be wary; she shook her head again.

"Did anyone ever hear of such obstinacy, or of such a robbery?" cried Grandet, in a voice which gradually rose till it rang through the house. "What! *here*, in my house, in my own house, someone has taken your gold! Taken all the gold that there was in the place! And I am not to know who it was? Gold is a precious thing. The best of girls go wrong and throw themselves away one way or another; that happens among great folk, and even among decent citizens; but think of throwing gold away! For you gave it to somebody, I suppose, eh?"

Eugénie gave no sign.

"Did anyone ever see such a daughter! Can you be

a child of mine? If you have parted with your money, you must have a receipt for it——”

“Was I free to do as I wished with it—Yes or no? Was it mine?”

“Why, you are a child.”

“I am of age.”

At first Grandet was struck dumb by his daughter daring to argue with him, and in this way! He turned pale, stamped, swore, and finding words at last, he shouted—

“Accursed serpent! Miserable girl! Oh! you know well that I love you, and you take advantage of it! You ungrateful child! She would rob and murder her own father! *Pardieu!* you would have thrown all we have at the feet of that vagabond with the morocco boots. By my father’s pruning-hook, I cannot disinherit you, but in the name of thunder! I can curse you; you and your cousin and your children. Nothing good can come out of this; do you hear? If it was to Charles that—But, no, that is impossible. What if that miserable puppy should have robbed me?”

He glared at his daughter, who was still silent and unmoved.

“She does not stir! She does not flinch! She is more of a Grandet than I am. You did not give your gold away for nothing, anyhow. Come, now; tell me about it?”

Eugénie looked up at her father; her satirical glance exasperated him.

“Eugénie, this is my house; so long as you are under your father’s roof you must do as your father bids you. The priests command you to obey me.”

Eugénie bent her head again.

“You are wounding all my tenderest feelings,” he went on. “Get out of my sight until you are ready to obey me. Go to your room and stay there until I give you leave to come out of it. Nanon will bring you bread and water. Do you hear what I say? Go!”

Eugénie burst into tears, and fled away to her mother. Grandet took several turns in his garden without heeding the snow or the cold; then, suspecting that his daughter would be in his wife’s room, and delighted with the idea of

catching them in flagrant disobedience to orders, he climbed the stairs as stealthily as a cat, and suddenly appeared in Mme. Grandet's room. He was right; she was stroking Eugénie's hair, and the girl lay with her face hidden in her mother's breast.

"Poor child! Never mind, your father will relent."

"She has no longer a father!" said the cooper. "Is it really possible, Mme. Grandet, that we have brought such a disobedient daughter into the world? A pretty bringing up; and pious, too, above all things! Well! how is it you are not in your room? Come, off to prison with you; to prison, miss."

"Do you mean to take my daughter away from me, sir?" said Mme. Grandet, as she raised a flushed face and bright, feverish eyes.

"If you want to keep her, take her along with you, and the house will be rid of you both at once—— Thunder! Where is the gold? What has become of the gold?"

Eugénie rose to her feet, looked proudly at her father, and went into her room; he turned the key in the door.

"Nanon!" he shouted, "you can rake out the fire in the parlor"; then he came back and sat down in an easy-chair that stood between the fire and his wife's bedside, saying as he did so, "Of course, she gave her gold to that miserable seducer, Charles, who only cared for our money."

Mme. Grandet's love for her daughter gave her courage in the face of this danger; to all appearance she was deaf, dumb, and blind to all that was implied by this speech. She turned on her bed so as to avoid the angry glitter of her husband's eyes.

"I knew nothing about all this," she said. "Your anger makes me so ill, that if my forebodings come true I shall only leave this room when they carry me out feet foremost. I think you might have spared me this scene, sir. I, at all events, have never caused you any vexation. Your daughter loves you, and I am sure she is as innocent as a newborn babe; so do not make her miserable, and take back your word. This cold is terribly sharp; it might make her seriously ill."

"I shall neither see her nor speak to her. She shall stop in her room on bread and water until she has done as her father bids her. What the devil! the head of a family ought to know when gold goes out of his house, and where it goes. She had the only rupees that there are in France, for aught I know; then there were genovines besides, and Dutch ducats——"

"Eugénie is our only child, and even if she had flung them into the water——"

"Into the water!" shouted the worthy cooper. "*Into the water!* Mme. Grandet, you are raving! When I say a thing I mean it, as you well know. If you want to have peace in the house, get her to confess to you, and worm this secret out of her. Women understand each other, and are cleverer at this sort of thing than we are. Whatever she may have done, I certainly shall not eat her. Is she afraid of me? If she had covered her cousin with gold from head to foot, he is safe on the high seas by this time, hein! We cannot run after him——"

"Really, sir——" his wife began.

But Mme. Grandet's nature had developed during her daughter's trouble; she felt more keenly, and perhaps her thoughts moved more quickly, or it may be that excitement and the strain upon her overwrought nerves had sharpened her mental faculties. She saw the wen on her husband's face twitch ominously even as she began to speak, and changed her purpose without changing her voice.

"Really, sir, have I any more authority over her than you have? She has never said a word about it to me. She takes after you."

"Goodness! your tongue is hung in the middle this morning! Tut, tut, tut; you are going to fly in my face, I suppose? Perhaps you and she are both in it."

He glared at his wife.

"Really, M. Grandet, if you want to kill me, you have only to keep on as you are doing. I tell you, sir, and if it were to cost me my life, I would say it again—you are too hard on your daughter; she is a great deal more sensible than you are. The money belonged to her; she could only

have made a good use of it, and our good works ought to be known to God alone. Sir, I implore you, take Eugénie back into favor. It will lessen the effect of the shock your anger gave me, and perhaps will save my life. My daughter, sir; give me back my daughter!"

"I am off," he said. "It is unbearable here in my house, when a mother and daughter talk and argue as if—Brooouh! Pouah! You have given me bitter New Year's gifts, Eugénie!" he called. "Yes, yes, cry away! You shall repent it, do you hear? What is the good of taking the sacrament six times a quarter if you give your father's gold away on the sly to an idle rascal who will break your heart when you have nothing else left to give him? You will find out what he is, that Charles of yours, with his morocco boots and his stand-off airs. He can have no heart and no conscience either, when he dares to carry off a poor girl's money without the consent of her parents."

As soon as the street-door was shut, Eugénie stole out of her room and came to her mother's bedside.

"You were very brave for your daughter's sake," she said.

"You see where crooked ways lead us, child!—You have made me tell a lie."

"Oh! mother, I will pray to God to let all the punishment fall on me."

"Is it true?" asked Nanon, coming upstairs in dismay, "that mademoiselle here is to be put on bread and water for the rest of her life?"

"What does it matter, Nanon?" asked Eugénie calmly.

"Why, before I would eat 'kitchen' while the daughter of the house is eating dry bread, I would—no, no, it won't do."

"Don't say a word about it, Nanon," Eugénie warned her.

"It would stick in my throat; but you shall see."

Grandet dined alone, for the first time in twenty-four years.

"So you are a widower, sir," said Nanon. "It is a very dismal thing to be a widower when you have a wife and daughter in the house."

"I did not speak to you, did I? Keep a still tongue in your head, or you will have to go. What have you in that saucepan that I can hear boiling away on the stove?"

"Some dripping that I am melting down——"

"There will be some people here this evening; light the fire."

The Cruchots and their friends, Mme. des Grassins and her son, all came in about eight o'clock, and to their amazement saw neither Mme. Grandet nor her daughter.

"My wife is not very well to-day, and Eugénie is upstairs with her," replied the old cooper, without a trace of perturbation on his face.

After an hour spent, in more or less trivial talk, Mme. des Grassins, who had gone upstairs to see Mme. Grandet, came down again to the dining-room, and was met with a general inquiry of "How is Mme. Grandet?"

"She is very far from well," the lady said gravely. "Her health seems to me to be in a very precarious state. At her time of life you ought to take great care of her, Papa Grandet."

"We shall see," said the vine-grower abstractedly, and the whole party took leave of him. As soon as the Cruchots were out in the street and the door was shut behind them, Mme. des Grassins turned to them and said, "Something has happened among the Grandets. The mother is very ill; she herself has no idea how ill she is, and the girl's eyes are red, as if she had been crying for a long while. Are they wanting to marry her against her will?"

That night, when the cooper had gone to bed, Nanon, in list slippers, stole up to Eugénie's room, and displayed a raised pie, which she had managed to bake in a saucepan.

"Here, mademoiselle," said the kind soul, "Cornoiller brought a hare for me. You eat so little that the pie will last you for quite a week, and there is no fear of its spoiling in this frost. You shall not live on dry bread, at any rate; it is not at all good for you."

"Poor Nanon!" said Eugénie, as she pressed the girl's hand.

"I have made it very dainty and nice, and *he* never found

out about it. I paid for the lard and the bay-leaves out of my six francs; I can surely do as I like with my own money," and the old servant fled, thinking that she heard Grandet stirring.

Several months went by. The cooper went to see his wife at various time in the day, and never mentioned his daughter's name—never saw her, nor made the slightest allusion to her. Mme. Grandet's health grew worse and worse; she had not once left her room since that terrible January morning. But nothing shook the old cooper's determination; he was hard, cold, and unyielding as a block of granite. He came and went, his manner of life was in nowise altered; but he did not stammer now, and he talked less; perhaps, too, in matters of business, people found him harder than before, but errors crept into his bookkeeping.

Something had certainly happened in the Grandet family, both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were agreed on that head; and "What can be the matter with the Grandets?" became a stock question which people asked each other at every social gathering in Saumur.

Eugénie went regularly to church, escorted by Nanon. If Mme. des Grassins spoke to her in the porch as she came out, the girl would answer evasively, and the lady's curiosity remained ungratified. But after two months spent in this fashion it was almost impossible to hide the real state of affairs from Mme. des Grassins or from the Cruchots; a time came when all pretexts were exhausted, and Eugénie's constant absence still demanded an explanation. A little later, though no one could say how or when the secret leaked out, it became common property, and the whole town knew that ever since New Year's Day Mlle. Grandet had been locked up in her room by her father's orders, and that there she lived on bread and water in solitary confinement, and without a fire. Nanon, it was reported, cooked dainties for her, and brought food secretly to her room at night. Further particulars were given. It was even said that only when Grandet was out of the house could the young girl nurse her mother, or indeed see her at all.

People blamed Grandet severely. He was regarded as an

outlaw, as it were, by the whole town; all his hardness, his bad faith was remembered against him, and everyone shunned him. They whispered and pointed at him as he went by; and as his daughter passed along the crooked street on her way to Mass or to vespers, with Nanon at her side, people would hurry to their windows and look curiously at the wealthy heiress's face—a face so sad and so divinely sweet.

The town gossip reached her ears as slowly as it reached her father's. Her imprisonment and her father's displeasure were as nothing to her; had she not her map of the world? And from her window could she not see the little bench, the old wall, and the garden walks? Was not the sweetness of those past kisses still upon her lips? So, sustained by love and by the consciousness of her innocence in the sight of God, she could patiently endure her solitary life and her father's anger; but there was another sorrow, so deep and so overwhelming that Eugénie could not find a refuge from it. The gentle, patient mother was gradually passing away; it seemed as if the beauty of her soul shone out more and more brightly in those dark days as she drew nearer to the tomb. Eugénie often bitterly blamed herself for this illness, telling herself that she had been the innocent cause of the painful malady that was slowly consuming her mother's life; and, in spite of all her mother said to comfort her, this remorseful feeling made her cling more closely to the love she was to lose so soon. Every morning, as soon as her father had left the house, she went to sit at her mother's bedside. Nanon used to bring her breakfast to her there. But for poor Eugénie in her sadness, this suffering was almost more than she could bear; she looked at her mother's face, and then at Nanon, with tears in her eyes, and was dumb; she did not dare to speak of her cousin now. It was always Mme. Grandet who began to talk of him; it was she who was forced to say, "Where is *he*? Why does *he* not write?"

Neither mother nor daughter had any idea of the distance.

"Let us think of him without talking about him, mother," Eugénie would answer. "You are suffering; you come be-

fore everyone"; and when she said "everyone," Eugénie meant *him*.

"I have no wish to live any longer, child," Mme. Grandet used to say. "God in His protecting care has led me to look forward joyfully to death as the end of my sorrows."

Everything that she said was full of Christian piety. For the first few months of the year her husband breakfasted in her room, and always, as he walked restlessly about, he heard the same words from her, uttered with angelic gentleness, but with firmness; the near approach of death had given her the courage which she had lacked all her life.

"Thank you, sir, for the interest which you take in my health," she said in response to the merest formality of an inquiry; "but if you really wish to sweeten the bitterness of my last moments, and to alleviate my sufferings, forgive our daughter, and act like a Christian, a husband, and a father."

At these words Grandet would come and sit down by the bed, much as a man who is threatened by a shower betakes himself resignedly to the nearest sheltering archway. He would say nothing, and his wife might say what she liked. To the most pathetic, loving, and fervent prayers, he would reply, "My poor wife, you are looking a bit pale to-day."

His daughter seemed to have passed entirely out of his mind; the mention of her name brought no change over his stony face and hard-set mouth. He always gave the same vague answers to her pleadings, couched in almost the same words, and did not heed his wife's white face, nor the tears that flowed down her cheeks.

"May God forgive you, as I do, sir," she said. "You will have need of mercy some day."

Since his wife's illness had begun he had not ventured to make use of his formidable "Tut, tut, tut," but his tyranny was not relaxed one whit by his wife's angelic gentleness.

Her plain face was growing almost beautiful now as a beautiful nature showed itself more and more, and her soul grew absolute. It seemed as if the spirit of prayer had purified and refined the homely features—as if they were lit up by some inner light. Which of us has not known such

faces as this, and seen their final transfiguration—the triumph of a soul that has dwelt for so long among pure and lofty thoughts that they set their seal unmistakably upon the roughest lineaments at last? The sight of this transformation wrought by the physical suffering which stripped the soul of the rags of humanity that hid it, had a certain effect, however feeble, upon that man of bronze—the old cooper. A stubborn habit of silence had succeeded to his old contemptuous ways, a wish to keep up his dignity as a father of a family was apparently the motive for this course.

The faithful Nanon no sooner showed herself in the market-place than people began to rail at her master and to make jokes at his expense; but however loudly public opinion condemned old Grandet, the maid-servant, jealous for the honor of the family, stoutly defended him.

“Well, now,” she would say to those who spoke ill of her master, “don’t we all grow harder as we grow older? And would you have him different from other people? Just hold your lying tongues. Mademoiselle lives like a queen. She is all by herself no doubt, but she likes it; and my master and mistress have their very good reasons for what they do.”

At last, one evening towards the end of spring, Mme. Grandet, feeling that this trouble, even more than her illness, was shortening her days, and that any farther attempt on her part to obtain forgiveness for Eugénie was hopeless, confided her troubles to the Cruchots.

“To put a girl of twenty-two on a diet of bread and water!——” cried the President de Bonfons, “and without just and sufficient cause! Why, that constitutes legal cruelty; she might lodge a complaint; *in as much as*——”

“Come, nephew,” said the notary, “that is enough of your law court jargon. Be easy, madame; I will bring this imprisonment to an end to-morrow.”

Eugénie heard, and came out of her room.

“Gentlemen,” she said, impelled by a certain pride, “do nothing in this matter, I beg of you. My father is master in his own house, and so long as I live under his roof I ought to obey him. No one has any right to criticise his conduct;

he is answerable to God, and to God alone. If you have any friendly feeling for me, I entreat you to say nothing whatever about this. If you expose my father to censure, you would lower us all in the eyes of the world. I am very thankful to you, gentlemen, for the interest you have taken in me, and you will oblige me still farther if you will put a stop to the gossip that is going on in the town. I only heard of it by accident."

"She is right," said Mme. Grandet.

"Mademoiselle, the best possible way to stop people's talk would be to set you at liberty," said the old notary respectfully; he was struck with the beauty which solitude and love and sadness had brought into Eugénie's face.

"Well, Eugénie, leave it in M. Cruchot's hands, as he seems to think success is certain. He knows your father, and he knows, too, how to put the matter before him. You and your father must be reconciled at all costs, if you want me to be happy during the little time I have yet to live."

The next morning Grandet went out to take a certain number of turns round the little garden, a habit that he had fallen into during Eugénie's incarceration. He chose to take the air while Eugénie was dressing; and when he had reached the great walnut tree, he stood behind it for a few moments and looked at her window. He watched her as she brushed her long hair, and there was a sharp struggle doubtless between his natural stubborn will and a longing to take his daughter in his arms and kiss her.

He would often go to sit on the little worm-eaten bench where Charles and Eugénie had vowed to love each other forever; and she, his daughter, also watched her father furtively, or looked into her glass and saw him reflected there, and the garden and the bench. If he rose and began to walk again, she went to sit in the window. It was pleasant to her to be there. She studied the bit of old wall, the delicate sprays of wild flowers that grew in its crevices, the maiden-hair fern, the morning-glories, and a little plant with thick leaves and white or yellow flowers, a sort of stone-crop that grows everywhere among the vines at Saumur and Tours.

Old M. Cruchot came early on a bright June morning and found the vine-grower sitting on the little bench with his back against the wall, absorbed in watching his daughter.

"What can I do for you, M. Cruchot?" he asked, as he became aware of the notary's presence.

"I have come about a matter of business."

"Aha! Have you some gold to exchange for crowns?"

"No, no. It is not a question of money this time, but of your daughter Eugénie. Everybody is talking about you and her."

"What business is it of theirs? A man's house is his castle."

"Just so; and a man can kill himself if he has a mind to, or he can do worse, he can throw his money out of the windows."

"What?"

"Eh! but your wife is very ill, my friend. You ought even to call in M. Bergerin, her life is in danger. If she were to die for want of proper care, you would hear of it, I am sure."

"Tut, tut, tut! you know what is the matter with her, and when once one of these doctors sets foot in your house, they will come five or six times a day."

"After all, Grandet, you will do as you think best. We are old friends; there is no one in all Saumur who has your interests more at heart than I, so it was only my duty to let you know this. Whatever happens, you are responsible, and you understand your own business, so there it is. Besides, that was not what I came to speak about. There is something else more serious for you, perhaps; for, after all, you do not wish to kill your wife, she is too useful to you. Just think what your position would be if anything happened to Mme. Grandet; you would have your daughter to face. You would have to give an account to Eugénie of her mother's share of your joint estate; and if she chose, your daughter might demand her mother's fortune, for she, and not you, will succeed to it; and in that case you might have to sell Froidfond."

Cruchot's words were like a bolt from the blue; for much

as the worthy cooper knew about business, he knew very little law. The idea of a forced sale had never occurred to him.

"So I should strongly recommend you to treat her kindly," the notary concluded.

"But do you know what she has done, Cruchot?"

"No. What was it?" asked the notary; he felt curious to know the reason of the quarrel, and a confidence from old Grandet was an interesting novelty.

"She has given away her gold."

"Oh! well, it belonged to her, didn't it?"

"That is what they all say!" said Grandet, letting his arms fall with a tragic gesture.

"And for a trifle like that you would shut yourself out from all hope of any concessions which you will want her to make if her mother dies?"

"Ah! do you call six thousand francs in gold a trifle?"

"Eh! my old friend, have you any idea what it will cost you to have your property valued and divided if Eugénie should compel you to do so?"

"What would it cost?"

"Two, three, or even four thousand francs. How could you know what it was worth unless you put it up to public auction? While if you come to an understanding——"

"By my father's pruning-hook!" cried the vine-grower, sinking back, and turning quite pale. "We will see about this, Cruchot."

After a moment of agony or of dumb bewilderment, Grandet spoke, with his eyes fixed on his neighbor's face. "Life is very hard," he said. "It is full of troubles. Cruchot," he went on, earnestly, "you are incapable of deceiving me; give me your word of honor that this ditty of yours has a solid foundation. Let me look at the Code; I want to see the Code!"

"My poor friend," said the notary, "I ought to understand my own profession."

"Then it is really true? I shall be plundered, cheated, robbed, and murdered by my own daughter!"

"She is her mother's heiress."

"Then what is the good of having children? Oh! my wife, I love my wife; luckily, she has a sound constitution; she is a la Bertellière."

"She has not a month to live."

The cooper struck his forehead, took a few paces, and then came back again.

"What is to be done?" he demanded of Cruchot, with a tragic expression on his face.

"Well, perhaps Eugénie might simply give up her claims to her mother's property. You do not mean to disinherit her, do you? But do not treat her harshly if you want her to make a concession of that kind. I am speaking against my own interests, my friend. How do I make a living but by drawing up inventories and conveyances and deeds of arrangement and by winding up estates?"

"We shall see, we shall see. Let us say no more about this now, Cruchot. You have wrung my very soul. Have you taken any gold lately?"

"No; but I have some old louis, nine or ten perhaps, which you can have. Look here, my good friend, make it up with Eugénie; all Saumur is pointing a finger at you."

"The rogues!"

"Well, consols have risen to ninety-nine, so you should be satisfied for once in your life."

"At ninety-nine, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Hey! hey! ninety-nine!" the old man said, as he went with the notary to the street-door. He felt too much agitated by what he had just heard to stay quietly at home; so he went up to his wife's room.

"Come, mother, you may spend the day with your daughter, I am going to Froidfond. Be good, both of you, while I am away. This is our wedding-day, dear wife. Stay! here are ten crowns for you, for the Fête-Dieu procession; you have wanted to give it for long enough. Take a holiday! have some fun, keep up your spirits and get well. *Vive la joie!*"

He threw down ten crowns of six francs each upon the

bed, took her face in his hands, and kissed her on the forehead.

"You are feeling better, dear wife, are you not?"

"But how can you think of receiving God, who forgives, into your house, when you have shut your heart against your daughter?" she said, with deep feeling in her voice.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said the father soothingly; "we will see about that."

"Merciful Heaven! Eugénie!" called the mother, her face flushed with joy; "Eugénie, come and give your father a kiss, you are forgiven!" But her worthy father had vanished. He fled with all his might in the direction of his vineyards, where he set himself to the task of constructing his new world out of this chaos of strange ideas.

Grandet had just entered upon his sixty-seventh year. Avarice had gained a stronger hold upon him during the past two years of his life; indeed, all lasting passions grow with man's growth; and it had come to pass with him, as with all men whose lives are ruled by one master-idea, that he clung with all the force of his imagination to the symbol which represented that idea for him. Gold—to have gold, that he might see and touch it, had become with him a perfect monomania. His disposition to tyrannize had also grown with his love of money, and it seemed to him to be monstrous that he should be called upon to give up the least portion of his property on the death of his wife. Was he to render an account of her fortune, and to have an inventory drawn up of everything he possessed—personalty and real estate, and put it all up to auction?

"That would be stark ruin," he said aloud to himself, as he stood among his vines and examined their stems.

He made up his mind at last, and came back to Saumur at dinner-time fully determined on his course. He would humor Eugénie, and coax and cajole her so that he might die royally, keeping the control of his millions in his hands until his latest sigh. It happened that he let himself in with his master-key; he crept noiselessly as a wolf up the stairs to his wife's room, which he entered just as Eugénie was setting the dressing-case, in all its golden glory, upon

her mother's bed. The two women had stolen a pleasure in Grandet's absence; they were looking at the portraits and tracing out Charles's features in his mother's likeness.

"It is just his forehead and his mouth!" Eugénie was saying, as the vine-grower opened the door.

Mme. Grandet saw how her husband's eyes darted upon the gold. "Oh! God, have pity upon us!" she cried.

The vine-grower seized upon the dressing-case as a tiger might spring upon a sleeping child.

"What may this be?" he said, carrying off the treasure to the window, where he ensconced himself with it. "Gold! solid gold!" he cried, "and plenty of it too; there is a couple of pounds' weight here. Aha! so this was what Charles gave you in exchange for your pretty gold pieces? Why did you not tell me? It was a good stroke of business, little girl. You are your father's own daughter, I see. (Eugénie trembled from head to foot.) This belongs to Charles, doesn't it?" the good man went on.

"Yes, father; it is not mine. That case is a sacred trust."

"Tut, tut, tut! he has gone off with your money; you ought to make good the loss of your little treasure."

"Oh! father!——"

The old man had taken out his pocket-knife, with a view to wrenching away a plate of the precious metal, and for the moment had been obliged to lay the case on a chair beside him. Eugénie sprang forward to secure her treasure; but the cooper, who had kept an eye upon his daughter as well as upon the casket, put out his arm to prevent this, and thrust her back so roughly that she fell on to the bed.

"Sir! sir!" cried the mother, rising and sitting upright.

Grandet had drawn out his knife, and was about to insert the blade beneath the plate.

"Father!" cried Eugénie, going down on her knees and dragging herself nearer to him as she knelt; "father, in the name of all the saints, and the Holy Virgin, for the sake of Christ who died on the cross, for your own soul's salvation, father, if you have any regard for my life, do not touch it! The case is not yours, and it is not mine. It

belongs to an unhappy kinsman, who gave it into my keeping, and I ought to give it back to him untouched."

"What do you look at it for if it is a deposit? Looking at it is worse than touching it."

"Do not pull it to pieces, father! You will bring dishonor upon me. Father! do you hear me?"

"For pity's sake, sir!" entreated the mother.

"Father!"

The shrill cry rang through the house and brought the frightened Nanon upstairs. Eugénie caught up a knife that lay within her reach.

"Well?" said Grandet, calmly, with a cold smile on his lips.

"Sir! you are killing me!" said the mother.

"Father, if you cut away a single scrap of gold, I shall stab myself with this knife. It is your doing that my mother is dying, and now my death will also be laid at your door. It shall be wound for wound."

Grandet held his knife suspended above the case, looked at his daughter, and hesitated.

"Would you really do it, Eugénie?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" said the mother.

"She would do as she says," cried Nanon. "Do be sensible, sir, for once in your life."

The cooper wavered for a moment, looking first at the gold and then at his daughter.

Mme. Grandet fainted.

"There! sir, you see, the mistress is dying," cried Nanon.

"There! there! child, do not let us fall out about a box. Just take it back!" cried the cooper hastily, throwing the case on to the bed. "And, Nanon, go for M. Bergerin. Come! come! mother," he said, and he kissed his wife's hand; "never mind, there! there! we have made it up, haven't we, little girl? No more dry bread; you shall eat whatever you like—— Ah! she is opening her eyes. Well, now, little mother, dear little mother, don't take on so! Look! I am going to kiss Eugénie! She loves her cousin, does she? She shall marry him if she likes; she shall keep his little case for him. But you must live for a long while yet, my poor

wife! Come! turn your head a little. Listen! you shall have the finest altar at the Fête-Dieu that has ever been seen in Saumur."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* how can you treat your wife and daughter in this way!" moaned Mme. Grandet.

"I will never do so again, never again!" cried the cooper. "You shall see, my poor wife."

He went to his strong-room and returned with a handful of louis d'or, which he scattered on the coverlet.

"There! Eugénie, there! wife, those are for you," he said, fingering the gold coins as they lay. "Come! cheer up, and get well, you shall want for nothing, neither you nor Eugénie. There are a hundred louis for her. You will not give them away, will you, eh, Eugénie?"

Mme. Grandet and her daughter gazed at each other in amazement.

"Take back the money, father; we want nothing, nothing but your love."

"Oh! well, just as you like," he said, as he pocketed the louis, "let us live together like good friends. Let us all go down to the dining-room and have dinner, and play loto every evening, and put our two sous into the pool, and be as merry as the maids. Eh! my wife?"

"Alas! how I wish that I could, if you would like it," said the dying woman, "but I am not strong enough to get up."

"Poor mother!" said the cooper, "you do not know how much I love you; and you too, child!"

He drew his daughter to him and embraced her with fervor.

"Oh! how pleasant it is to kiss one's daughter after a squabble, my little girl! There! mother, do you see? We are quite at one again now. Just go and lock that away," he said to Eugénie, as he pointed to the case. "There! there! don't be frightened; I will never say another word to you about it."

M. Bergerin, who was regarded as the cleverest doctor in Saumur, came before very long. He told Grandet plainly after the interview that the patient was very seriously ill;

that any excitement might be fatal to her; that with a light diet, perfect tranquillity, and the most constant care, her life might possibly be prolonged until the end of the autumn.

"Will it be an expensive illness?" asked Grandet. "Will she want a lot of physic?"

"Not much physic, but very careful nursing," answered the doctor, who could not help smiling.

"After all, M. Bergerin, you are a man of honor," said Grandet uneasily. "I can depend upon you, can I not? Come and see my wife whenever and as often as you think it really necessary. Preserve her life. My good wife—I am very fond of her, you see, though I may not show it; it is all shut up inside me, and I am one that takes things terribly to heart; I am in trouble too. It all began with my brother's death; I am spending, oh!—heaps of money in Paris for him—the very eyes out of my head, in fact, and it seems as if there were no end to it. Good-day, sir. If you can save my wife, save her, even if it takes a hundred or two hundred francs."

In spite of Grandet's fervent wishes that his wife might be restored to health, for this question of the inheritance was like a foretaste of death for him; in spite of his readiness to fulfill the least wishes of the astonished mother and daughter in every possible way; in spite of Eugénie's tenderest and most devoted care, it was evident that Mme. Grandet's life was rapidly drawing to a close. Day by day she grew weaker, and, as often happens at her time of life, she had no strength to resist the disease that was wasting her away. She seemed to have no more vitality than the autumn leaves; and as the sunlight shining through the leaves turns them to gold, so she seemed to be transformed by the light of heaven. Her death was a fitting close to her life, a death wholly Christian; is not that saying that it was sublime? Her love for her daughter, her meek virtues, her angelic patience, had never shone more brightly than in that month of October, 1822, when she passed away. All through her illness she had never uttered the slightest complaint, and her spotless soul left earth for heaven with but one regret—for the daughter whose sweet companionship had been the solace

of her dreary life, and for whom her dying eyes foresaw troubles and sorrows manifold. She trembled at the thought of this lamb, spotless as she herself was, left alone in the world among selfish beings who sought to despoil her of her fleece, her treasure.

"There is no happiness save in heaven," she said just before she died; "you will know that one day, my child."

On the morrow after her mother's death, it seemed to Eugénie that she had yet one more reason for clinging fondly to the old house where she had been born, and where she had found life so hard of late—it became for her the place where her mother had died. She could not see the old chair set on little blocks of wood, the place by the window where her mother used to sit, without shedding tears. Her father showed her such tenderness, and took such care of her, that she began to think that she had never understood his nature; he used to come to her room and take her down to breakfast on his arm, and sit looking at her for whole hours with something like kindness in his eyes, with the same brooding look that he gave his gold. Indeed, the old cooper almost trembled before his daughter, and was altogether so unlike himself, that Nanon and the Cruchotins wondered at these signs of weakness, and set it down to his advanced age; they began to fear that the old man's mind was giving way. But when the day came on which the family began to wear their mourning, M. Cruchot, who alone was in his client's confidence, was invited to dinner, and these mysteries were explained. Grandet waited till the table had been cleared, and the doors carefully shut.

Then he began: "My dear child, you are your mother's heiress, and there are some little matters of business that we must settle between us. Is that not so, eh, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Is it really pressing; must it be settled to-day, father?"

"Yes, yes, little girl. I could not endure this suspense any longer, and I am sure you would not make things hard for me."

"Oh! father——"

"Well, then, everything must be decided to-night."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"Well, little girl, it is not for me to tell you. You tell her, Cruchot."

"Mademoiselle, your father wants neither to divide nor to sell his property, nor to pay a heavy succession duty upon the ready money he may happen to have just now. So if these complications are to be avoided, there must be no inventory made out, and all the property must remain undivided for the present——"

"Cruchot, are you quite sure of what you are saying that you talk in this way before a child?"

"Let me say what I have to say, Grandet."

"Yes, yes, my friend. Neither you nor my daughter would plunder me. You would not plunder me, would you, little girl?"

"But what am I to do, M. Cruchot?" asked Eugénie, losing patience.

"Well," said the notary, "you must sign this deed, by which you renounce your claims to your mother's property; the property would be secured to you, but your father would have the use of it for his life, and there would be no need to make a division now."

"I understand nothing of all this that you are saying," Eugénie answered; "give me the deed, and show me where I am to sign my name."

Grandet looked from the document to his daughter, and again from his daughter to the document. His agitation was so great that he actually wiped several drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"I would much rather you simply waived all claim to your poor dear mother's property, little girl," he broke in, "instead of signing that deed. It will cost a lot to register it. I would rather you renounced your claims and trusted to me for the future. I would allow you a good round sum, say a hundred francs every month. You could pay for Masses then, you see; you could have Masses said for anyone that—Eh? A hundred francs (in livres) every month?"

"I will do just as you like, father."

"Mademoiselle," said the notary, "it is my duty to point

out to you that you are robbing yourself without guarantee——”

“*Eh! mon Dieu!*” she answered. “What does that matter to me?”

“Do be quiet, Cruchot. So it is settled, quite settled!” cried Grandet, taking his daughter’s hand and striking his own into it. “You will not go back from your word, Eugénie? You are a good girl, hein!”

“Oh! father——”

In his joy he embraced his daughter, almost suffocating her as he did so.

“There! child, you have given fresh life to your father; but you are only giving him what he gave you, so we are quits. This is how business ought to be conducted, and life is a business transaction. Bless you! You are a good girl, and one that really loves her old father. You can do as you like now. Then good-by till to-morrow, Cruchot,” he added, turning to the horrified notary. “You will see that the deed of renunciation is properly drawn up for the clerk of the court.”

By noon next day the declaration was drawn up, and Eugénie herself signed away all her rights to her heritage. Yet a year slipped by, and the cooper had not kept his promise, and Eugénie had not received a sou of the monthly income which was to have been hers; when Eugénie spoke to him about it, half-laughingly, he could not help blushing; he hurried up to his room, and when he came down again he handed her about a third of the jewelry which he had purchased of his nephew.

“There! child,” he said, with a certain sarcastic ring in his voice; “will you take these for your twelve hundred francs?”

“Oh! father, really? Will you really give them to me?”

“You shall have as much next year again,” said he, flinging it into her lap; “and so, before very long, you will have all his trinkets,” he added, rubbing his hands. He had made a very good bargain, thanks to his daughter’s sentiment about the jewelry, and was in high good-humor.

Yet, although the old man was still hale and vigorous,

he began to see that he must take his daughter into his confidence, and that she must learn to manage his concerns. So with this end in view he required her to be present while he gave out the daily stores, and for two years he made her receive the portion of the rent which was paid in kind. Gradually she came to know the names of the vineyards and farms; he took her with him when he visited his tenants. By the end of the third year he considered the initiation was complete; and, in truth, she had fallen into his ways unquestioningly, till it had become a matter of habit with her to do as her father had done before her. He had no further doubts, gave over the keys of the storeroom into her keeping, and installed her as mistress of the house.

Five years went by in this way, and no event disturbed their monotonous existence. Eugénie and her father lived a life of methodical routine with the same regularity of movement that characterized the old clock; doing the same things at the same hour day after day, year after year. Everyone knew that there had been a profound sorrow in Mlle. Grandet's life; every circle in Saumur had its theories of this secret trouble, and its suspicions as to the state of the heiress's heart, but she never let fall a word that could enlighten anyone on either point.

She saw no one but the three Cruchots and a few of their friends, who had gradually been admitted as visitors to the house. Under their instructions she had mastered the game of whist, and they dropped in nearly every evening for a rubber. In the year 1827 her father began to feel the infirmities of age, and was obliged to take her still farther into his confidence; she learned the full extent of his landed possessions, and was recommended in all cases of difficulty to refer to the notary Cruchot, whose integrity could be depended upon. Grandet reached the age of eighty-two, and towards the end of the year had a paralytic seizure, from which he never rallied. M. Bergerin gave him up, and Eugénie realized that very shortly she would be quite alone in the world; the thought drew her more closely to her father; she clung to this last link of affection that bound her to another soul. Love was all the world for her, as it

is for all women who love; and Charles had gone out of her world. She nursed her father with sublime devotion; the old man's intellect had grown feeble, but the greed of gold had become an instinct which survived his faculties.

Grandet died as he had lived. Every morning during that slow death he had himself wheeled across his room to a place beside the fire, whence he could keep the door of his cabinet in view; on the other side of the door, no doubt, lay his hoarded treasures of gold. He sat there, passive and motionless; but if anyone entered the room, he would glance uneasily at the newcomer, and then at the door with its sheathing of iron plates. He would ask the meaning of every sound, however faint, and, to the notary's amazement, the old man heard the dog bark in the yard at the back of the house. He roused from this apparent stupor at the proper hour on the days for receiving his rents and dues, for settling accounts with his vine-dressers, and giving receipts. Then he shifted his armchair round on its casters, until he faced the door of his cabinet, and his daughter was called upon to open it, and to put away the little bags of money in neat piles, one upon the other. He would watch her until it was all over and the door was locked again; and as soon as she had returned the precious key to him, he would turn round noiselessly and take up his old position, putting the key in his waistcoat pocket, where he felt for it from time to time.

His old friend the notary felt sure that it was only a question of time, and that Eugénie must of necessity marry his nephew the magistrate, unless, indeed, Charles Grandet returned; so he redoubled his attentions. He came every day to take Grandet's instructions, went at his bidding to Froidfond, to farm and meadow and vineyard; sold vintages, and exchanged all moneys received for gold, which was secretly sent to join the piles of bags stored up in the cabinet.

Then death came up close at last, and the vine-grower's strong frame wrestled with the Destroyer. Even in those days he would sit as usual by the fire, facing the door of his cabinet. He used to drag off the blankets that they

wrapped round him, and try to fold them, and say to Nanon, "Lock that up; lock that up, or they will rob me."

So long as he could open his eyes, where the last spark of life seemed to linger, they used to turn at once to the door of the room where all his treasures lay, and he would say to his daughter, in tones that seemed to thrill with a panic of fear—

"Are they there still?"

"Yes, father."

"Keep watch over the gold!—Let me see the gold," her father would say.

Then Eugénie used to spread out the louis on a table before him, and he would sit for whole hours with his eyes fixed on the louis in an unseeing stare, like that of a child who begins to see for the first time; and sometimes a weak imbecile smile, painful to see, would steal across his features.

"That warms me!" he muttered more than once, and his face expressed a perfect content.

When the curé came to administer the sacrament, all the life seemed to have died out of the miser's eyes, but they lit up for the first time for many hours at the sight of the silver crucifix, the candlesticks, and holy water vessel, all of silver; he fixed his gaze on the precious metal, and the wren twitched for the last time.

As the priest held the gilded crucifix above him that the image of Christ might be laid to his lips, he made a frightful effort to clutch it—a last effort which cost him his life. He called to Eugénie, who saw nothing; she was kneeling beside him, bathing in tears the hand that was growing cold already. "Give me your blessing, father," she entreated. "Be very careful!" the last words came from him; "one day you will render an account to me of everything here below." Which utterance clearly shows that a miser should adopt Christianity as his religion.

So Eugénie Grandet was now alone in the world, and her house was left to her desolate. There was no one but Nanon with whom she could talk over her troubles; she could look into no other eyes and find a response to them; big

Nanon was the only human being who loved her for herself. For Eugénie, Nanon was a providence; she was no longer a servant, she was an humble friend.

M. Cruchot informed Eugénie that she had three hundred thousand livres a year, derived from landed property in and around Saumur, besides six millions in the three per cents. (invested when the Funds were at sixty francs, whereas they now stood at seventy-seven), and in ready money two millions in gold, and a hundred thousand francs in silver, without counting any arrears that were due. Altogether her property amounted to about seventeen million francs.

"Where can my cousin be?" she said to herself.

On the day when M. Cruchot laid these facts before his new client, together with the information that the estate was now clear and free from all outstanding liabilities, Eugénie and Nanon sat on either side of the hearth, in the parlor, now so empty and so full of memories; everything recalled past days, from her mother's chair set on its wooden blocks to the glass tumbler out of which her cousin once drank.

"Nanon, we are alone, you and I."

"Yes, mamselle; if I only knew where he was, the charming young gentleman, I would set off on foot to find him."

"The sea lies between us," said Eugénie.

While the poor lonely heiress, with her faithful old servant for company, was shedding tears in the cold, dark house, which was all the world she knew, men talked from Orleans to Nantes of nothing but Mlle. Grandet and her seventeen millions. One of her first acts was to settle a pension of twelve hundred francs on Nanon, who, possessing already an income of six hundred francs of her own, at once became a great match. In less than a month she exchanged her condition of spinster for that of wife, at the instance and through the persuasion of Antoine Cornoiller, who was promoted to the position of bailiff and keeper to Mlle. Grandet. Mme. Cornoiller had an immense advantage over her contemporaries; her large features had stood the test of time better than those of many a comelier woman. She might be

fifty-nine years of age, but she did not look more than forty; thanks to an almost monastic regimen, she possessed rugged health and a high color, time seemed to have no effect on her, and perhaps she had never looked so well in her life as she did on her wedding-day. She had the compensating qualities of her style of ugliness; she was tall, stout, and strong; her face wore an indestructible expression of good-humor, and Cornoiller's lot seemed an enviable one to many beholders.

"Fast color," said the draper.

"She might have a family yet," said the dry-salter; "she is as well preserved as if she had been kept in brine, asking your pardon."

"She is rich; that fellow Cornoiller has done a good day's work," said another neighbor.

When Nanon left the old house and went down the crooked street on her way to the parish church, she met with nothing but congratulations and good-wishes. Nanon was very popular with her neighbors. Eugénie gave her three dozen spoons and forks as a wedding present. Cornoiller, quite overcome with such munificence, spoke of his mistress with tears in his eyes; he would have let himself be cut in pieces for her. Mme. Cornoiller became Eugénie's confidential servant; she was not only married, and had a husband of her own, her dignity was yet further increased, her happiness was doubled. *She* had at last a storeroom and a bunch of keys; *she* too gave out provisions just as her late master used to do. Then she had two subordinates—a cook and a waiting-woman, who took charge of the house linen and made Mlle. Grandet's dresses. As for Cornoiller, he combined the functions of forester and steward. It is needless to say that the cook and waiting-woman of Nanon's choosing were real domestic *treasures*. The tenants scarcely noticed the death of their late landlord; they were thoroughly broken in to a severe discipline, and M. and Mme. Cornoiller's reign was no whit less rigorous than that of the old régime.

Eugénie was a woman of thirty, and as yet had known none of the happiness of life. All through her joyless,

monotonous childhood she had had but one companion, a broken-spirited mother, whose sensitive nature had found little but suffering in a hard life. That mother had joyfully taken leave of existence, pitying the daughter who must still live on in the world. Eugénie would never lose the sense of her loss, but little of the bitterness of self-reproach mingled with her memories of her mother. She felt that she had always done a daughter's duty to her mother.

Love, her first and only love, had been a fresh source of suffering for Eugénie. For a few brief days she had seen her lover; she had given her heart to him between two stolen kisses; then he had left her, and had set the lands and seas of the world between them. Her father had cursed her for this love; it had nearly cost her her mother's life; it had brought her pain and sorrow and a few faint hopes. She had striven towards her happiness till her own forces had failed her, and another had not come to her aid.

Our souls live by giving and receiving; we have need of another soul; whatever it gives us we make our own, and give back again in overflowing measure. This is as vitally necessary for our inner life as breathing is for our corporeal existence. Without that wonderful physical process we perish; the heart suffers from lack of air, and ceases to beat. Eugénie was beginning to suffer.

She found no solace in her wealth; it could do nothing for her; her love, her religion, her faith in the future made up all her life. Love was teaching her what eternity meant. Her own heart and the Gospel each spoke to her of a life to come; life was everlasting, and love no less eternal. Night and day she dwelt with these two infinite thoughts, perhaps for her they were but one. She withdrew more and more into herself; she loved, and believed that she was loved.

For seven years her passion had wholly engrossed her.

Her treasures were not those millions left to her by her father, the money that went on accumulating year after year; but the two portraits which hung above her bed, Charles's leather case, the jewels which she had bought back from her father, and which were now proudly set forth on a layer of cotton wool inside the drawer in the old chest,

and her aunt's thimble which Mme. Grandet had used; every day Eugénie took up a piece of embroidery, a sort of Penelope's web, which she had only begun that she might wear the golden thimble, endeared to her by so many memories.

It seemed hardly probable that Mlle. Grandet would marry while she still wore mourning. Her sincere piety was well known. So the Cruchot family, counseled by the astute old Abbé, was fain to be content with surrounding the heiress with the most affectionate attentions. Her dining-room was filled every evening with the warmest and most devoted Cruchotins, who endeavored to surpass each other in singing the praises of the mistress of the house in every key. She had her physician-in-ordinary, her grand almoner, her chamberlain, her mistress of the robes, her prime minister, and last, but by no means least, her chancellor—a chancellor whose aim it was to keep her informed of everything. If the heiress had expressed any wish for a train-bearer, they would have found one for her. She was a queen, in fact, and never was queen so adroitly flattered. A great soul never stoops to flattery; it is the resource of little natures, who succeed in making themselves smaller still, that they may the better creep into the hearts of those about whom they circle. Flattery, by its very nature, implies an interested motive. So the people who filled Mlle. Grandet's sitting-room every evening (they addressed her and spoke of her among themselves as Mlle. de Froidfond now) heaped their praises upon their hostess in a manner truly marvelous. This chorus of praise embarrassed Eugénie at first; but however gross the flattery might be, she became accustomed to hear her beauty extolled, and if some newcomer had considered her to be plain, she certainly would have winced more under the criticism than she might have done eight years ago. She came at last to welcome their homage, which in her secret heart she laid at the feet of her idol. So also, by degrees, she accepted the position, and allowed herself to be treated as a queen, and saw her little court full every evening.

M. le Président de Bonfons was the hero of the circle; they lauded his talents, his personal appearance, his learning, his amiability; he was an inexhaustible subject of admiring

comment. Such an one would call attention to the fact that in seven years the magistrate had largely increased his fortune; Bonfons had at least ten thousand francs a year; and his property, like the lands of all the Cruchots in fact, lay within the compass of the heiress's vast estates.

"Do you know, mademoiselle," another courtier would remark, "that the Cruchots have forty thousand livres a year among them!"

"And they are putting money by," said Mlle. de Gribeaucourt, an old and trusty Cruchotine. "Quite lately a gentleman came from Paris on purpose to offer M. Cruchot two hundred thousand francs for his professional connection. If he could gain an appointment as justice of the peace, he ought to take the offer."

"He means to succeed M. de Bonfons as President, and is taking steps to that end," said Mme. d'Orsonval, "for M. le Président will be a councilor, and then a president of a court; he is so gifted that he is sure to succeed."

"Yes," said another, "he is a very remarkable man. Do you not think so, mademoiselle?"

"M. le Président" had striven to act up to the part he wanted to play. He was forty years old, his countenance was dark and ill-favored, he had, moreover, the wizened look which is frequently seen in men of his profession; but he affected the airs of youth, sported a malacca cane, refrained from taking snuff in Mlle. Grandet's house, and went thither arrayed in a white cravat and a shirt with huge frills, which gave him a quaint family resemblance to a turkey-gobbler. He called the fair heiress "our dear Eugénie," and spoke as if he were an intimate friend of the family. In fact, but for the number of those assembled, and the substitution of whist for loto, and the absence of M. and Mme. Grandet, the scene was scarcely changed; it might almost have been that first evening on which this story began.

The pack was still in pursuit of Eugénie's millions; it was a more numerous pack now; they gave tongue together, and hunted down their prey more systematically.

If Charles had come back from the far-off Indies, he would have found the same motives at work and almost the

same people. Mme. des Grassins, for whom Eugénie had nothing but kindness and pity, still remained to vex the Cruchots. Eugénie's face still shone out against the dark background, and Charles (though invisible) reigned there supreme as in other days.

Yet some advance had been made. Eugénie's birthday bouquet was never forgotten by the magistrate. Indeed, it had become an institution; every evening he brought the heiress a huge and wonderful bouquet. Mme. Cornoiller ostentatiously placed these offerings in a vase, and promptly flung them into a corner of the yard as soon as the visitors had departed.

In the early spring Mme. des Grassins made a move, and sought to trouble the felicity of the Cruchotins by talking to Eugénie of the Marquis de Froidfond, whose ruined fortunes might be retrieved if the heiress would return his estate to him by a marriage-contract. Mme. des Grassins lauded the Marquis and his title to the skies; and, taking Eugénie's quiet smile for consent, she went about saying that M. le Président Cruchot's marriage was not such a settled thing as *some* people imagined.

"M. de Froidfond may be fifty years old," she said, "but he looks no older than M. Cruchot; he is a widower, and has a family, it is true; but he is a marquis, he will be a peer of France one of these days, it is not such a bad match as times go. I know of my own certain knowledge that when old Grandet added his own property to the Froidfond estate he meant to graft his family into the Froidfonds. He often told me as much. Oh! he was a shrewd old man, this old man Grandet."

"Ah! Nanon," Eugénie said one evening, as she went to bed, "why has he not once written to me in seven years!——"

While these events were taking place in Saumur, Charles was making his fortune in the East. His first venture was very successful. He had promptly realized the sum of six thousand dollars. Crossing the line had cured him of many early prejudices; he soon saw very clearly that the best and quickest way of making money was the same in the tropics

as in Europe—by buying and selling men. He made a descent on the African coasts and bargained for negroes and other goods in demand in various markets. He threw himself heart and soul into his business, and thought of nothing else. He set one clear aim before him, to reappear in Paris, and to dazzle the world there with his wealth, to attain a position even higher than the one from which he had fallen.

By dint of rubbing shoulders with many men, traveling in many lands, coming in contact with various customs and religions, his code had been relaxed, and he had grown skeptical. His notions of right and wrong became less rigid when he found that what was looked upon as a crime in one country was held up to admiration in another. He saw that everyone was working for himself, that disinterestedness was rarely to be met with, and grew selfish and suspicious; the hereditary failings of the Grandets came out in him—the hardness, the shiftiness, and the greed of gain. He sold Chinese coolies, negro slaves, swallow-nests, children, artists, and anything and everything that brought in money. He became a money-lender on a large scale. Long practice in cheating the custom authorities had made him unscrupulous in other ways. He would make the voyage to St. Thomas, buy booty of the pirates there for a low price, and sell the merchandise in the dearest market.

During his first voyage Eugénie's pure and noble face had been with him, like the image of the Virgin which Spanish sailors set on the prows of their vessels; he had attributed his first success to a kind of magical efficacy possessed by her prayers and vows; but as time went on, the women of other countries, negresses, mulattoes, white skins, and yellow skins, orgies and adventures in many lands, completely effaced all recollection of his cousin, of Saumur, of the old house, of the bench, and of the kiss that he had snatched in the passage. He remembered nothing but the little garden shut in by its crumbling walls where he had learned the fate that lay in store for him; but he rejected all connection with the family. His uncle was an old fox who had filched his jewels. Eugénie had no place in his heart, he never gave

her a thought; but she occupied a page in his ledger as a creditor for six thousand francs.

Such conduct and such ideas explained Charles Grandet's silence. In the East Indies, at St. Thomas, on the coast of Africa, at Lisbon, in the United States, Charles Grandet the adventurer was known as Carl Sepherd, a pseudonym which he assumed so as not to compromise his real name. Carl Sepherd could be indefatigable, brazen, and greedy of gain; could conduct himself, in short, like a man who resolves to make a fortune *quibuscumque viis*, and makes haste to have done with villainy as soon as possible, in order to live respected for the rest of his days.

With such methods his career of prosperity was rapid and brilliant, and in 1827 he returned to Bordeaux on board the *Marie Caroline*, a fine brig belonging to a Royalist firm. He had nineteen hundred thousand francs with him in gold dust, carefully secreted in three strong casks; he hoped to sell it to the Paris mint, and to make eight per cent. on the transaction. There was also on board the brig a gentleman-in-ordinary to his majesty Charles X., a M. d'Aubrion, a worthy old man who had been rash enough to marry a woman of fashion whose money came from estates in the West India Islands. Mme. d'Aubrion's reckless extravagance had obliged him to go out to the Indies to sell her property. M. and Mme. d'Aubrion, of the house of d'Aubrion de Buch, which had lost its *capital* or chieftain just before the Revolution, were now in straitened circumstances. They had a bare twenty thousand francs of income and a daughter, a very plain girl, whom her mother made up her mind to marry without a dowry; for life in Paris is expensive, and, as has been seen, their means were reduced. It was an enterprise the success of which might have seemed somewhat problematical to a man of the world, in spite of the cleverness with which a woman of fashion is generally credited. Perhaps even Mme. d'Aubrion herself, when she looked at her daughter, was almost ready to despair of getting rid of her to anyone, even to the most besotted worshiper of rank and titles.

Mlle. d'Aubrion was a tall, spare demoiselle, somewhat

like her namesake the insect; she had a disdainful mouth, overshadowed by a long nose, thick at the tip, sallow in its normal condition, but very red after a meal, an organic change which was all the more unpleasant by reason of contrast with a pallid, insipid countenance. From some points of view she was all that a worldly mother, who was thirty-eight years of age, and had still some pretensions to beauty, could desire. But by way of compensating advantages, the Marquise d'Aubrion's distinguished air had been inherited by her daughter, and that young lady had been submitted to a Spartan regimen, which for the time being subdued the offending hue in her feature to a reasonable flesh-tint. Her mother had taught her how to dress herself. Under the same instructor she had acquired a charming manner, and had learned to assume that pensive expression which interests a man and leads him to imagine that here, surely, is the angel for whom he has hitherto sought in vain. She was carefully drilled in a certain maneuver with her foot—to let it peep forth from beneath her petticoat, and so call attention to its small size—whenever her nose became unseasonably red; indeed, the mother had made the very best of her daughter. By means of large sleeves, stiff skirts, puffs, padding, and high-pressure corsets she had produced a highly curious and interesting result, a specimen of femininity which ought to have been put into a museum for the edification of mothers generally.

Charles became very intimate with Mme. d'Aubrion; the lady had her own reasons for encouraging him. People said that during the time on board she left no stone unturned to secure such a prize for a son-in-law. It is at any rate certain that when they landed at Bordeaux Charles stayed in the same hotel with M., Mme., and Mlle. d'Aubrion, and they all traveled together to Paris. The Hôtel d'Aubrion was hampered with mortgages, and Charles was intended to come to the rescue. The mother had gone so far as to say that it would give her great pleasure to establish a son-in-law on the ground floor. She did not share M. d'Aubrion's aristocratic prejudices, and promised Charles Grandet to obtain letters patent from that easy-tempered

monarch, Charles X., which should authorize him, Grandet, to bear the name and assume the arms of the d'Aubrions, and (by purchasing the entail) to succeed to the property of Aubrion, which was worth about thirty-six thousand livres a year, to say nothing of the titles of Captal de Buch and Marquis d'Aubrion. They could be very useful to each other, in short; and what with this arrangement of a joint establishment, and one or two posts about the Court, the Hôtel d'Aubrion might count upon an income of a hundred thousand francs and more.

"And when a man has a hundred thousand francs a year, a name, a family, and a position at Court—for I shall procure an appointment for you as gentleman-of-the-bedchamber—the rest is easy. You can be anything you choose" (so she instructed Charles), "Master of Requests in the Council of State, Prefect, Secretary to an Embassy, the Ambassador himself if you like. Charles X. is much attached to d'Aubrion; they have known each other from childhood."

She fairly turned his head with these ambitious schemes, and during the voyage Charles began to cherish the hopes and ideas which had been so cleverly insinuated in the form of tender confidences. He never doubted but that his uncle had paid his father's creditors; he had been suddenly launched into the society of the Faubourg St. Germain, at that time the goal of social ambition; and beneath the shadow of Mlle. Mathilde's purple nose, he was shortly to appear as the Comte d'Aubrion, very much as the Dreux shone forth transformed into Brézés. He was dazzled by the apparent prosperity of the restored dynasty, which had seemed to be tottering to its fall when he left France; his head was full of wild ambitious dreams, which began on the voyage, and did not leave him in Paris. He resolved to strain every nerve to reach those pinnacles of glory which his egotistical would-be mother-in-law had pointed out to him. His cousin was only a dim speck in the remote past; she had no place in this brilliant future, no part in his dreams, but he went to see Annette. That experienced woman of the world gave counsel to her old friend; he must by no means let slip such an opportunity for an alliance; she promised

to aid him in all his schemes of advancement. In her heart she was delighted to see Charles thus secured to such a plain and uninteresting girl. He had grown very attractive during his stay in the Indies; his complexion had grown darker, he had gained in manliness and self-possession; he spoke in the firm, decided tones of a man who is used to command and to success. Ever since Charles Grandet had discovered that there was a definite part for him to play in Paris, he was himself at once.

Des Grassins, hearing of his return, his approaching marriage, and his large fortune, came to see him, and spoke of the three hundred thousand francs still owing to his father's creditors. He found Charles closeted with a goldsmith, from whom he had ordered jewels for Mlle. d'Aubrion's present, and who was submitting designs. Charles himself had brought magnificent diamonds from the Indies; but the cost of setting them, together with the silver plate and jewelry of the new establishment, amounted to more than two hundred thousand francs. He did not recognize des Grassins at first, and treated him with the cool insolence of a young man of fashion who is conscious that he has killed four men in as many duels in the Indies. As M. des Grassins had already called three or four times, Charles vouchsafed to hear him, but it was with bare politeness, and he did not pay the slightest attention to what the banker said.

"My father's debts are not mine," he said coolly. "I am obliged to you, sir, for the trouble you have been good enough to take, but I am none the better for it that I can see. I have not scraped together a couple of millions, earned with the sweat of my brow, to fling it to my father's creditors at this late day."

"But suppose that your father were to be declared bankrupt in a few days' time?"

"In a few days' time I shall be the Comte d'Aubrion, sir; so you can see that it is a matter of entire indifference to me. Besides, you know even better than I do that when a man has a hundred thousand livres a year, his father never has been a bankrupt," and he politely edged the deputy des Grassins to the door.

In the early days of the month of August, in that same year, Eugénie was sitting on the little bench in the garden where her cousin had sworn eternal love, and where she often took breakfast in summer mornings. The poor girl was almost happy for a few brief moments; she went over all the great and little events of her love before those catastrophes that followed. The morning was fresh and bright, and the garden was full of sunlight; her eyes wandered over the wall with its moss and flowers; it was full of cracks now, and all but in ruins, but no one was allowed to touch it, though Cornoiller was always prophesying to his wife that the whole thing would come down and crush somebody or other one of these days. The postman knocked at the door, and gave a letter into the hands of Mme. Cornoiller, who hurried into the garden, crying, "Mademoiselle! A letter! Is it *the* letter?" she added, as she handed it to her mistress.

The words rang through Eugénie's heart as the spoken sounds rang from the ramparts and the old garden wall.

"Paris!—It is his writing! Then he has come back."

Eugénie's face grew white; for several seconds she kept the seal unbroken, for her heart beat so fast that she could neither move nor see. Big Nanon stood and waited with both hands on her hips; joy seemed to puff like smoke from every wrinkle in her brown face.

"Do read it, mademoiselle!"

"Oh! why does he come back by way of Paris, Nanon, when he went by way of Saumur?"

"Read it; the letter will tell you why."

Eugénie's fingers trembled as she opened the envelope; a check on the firm of "Mme. des Grassins et Corret, Saumur," fell out of it and fluttered down. Nanon picked it up.

"MY DEAR COUSIN——"

("I am not 'Eugénie' now," she thought, and her heart stood still.) "You——"

"He used to say *thou*!" She folded her arms and dreaded to read any further; great tears gathered in her eyes.

"What is it? Is he dead?" asked Nanon.

“If he were, he could not write,” said Eugénie, and she read the letter through. It ran as follows:

“MY DEAR COUSIN:—You will, I am sure, hear with pleasure of the success of my enterprise. You brought me luck; I have come back to France a wealthy man, as my uncle advised. I have just heard of his death, together with that of my aunt, from M. des Grassins. Our parents must die in the course of nature, and we ourselves must follow them. I hope that by this time you are consoled for your loss; time cures all trouble, as I know by experience. Yes, my dear cousin, the day of illusions has gone by for me. I am sorry, but it cannot be helped. I have knocked about the world so much, and seen so much, that I have been led to reflect on life. I was a child when I went away; I have come back a man, and I have many things to think about now which I did not even dream of then. You are free, my cousin, and I too am free still; there is apparently nothing to hinder the realization of our youthful hopes, but I am too straightforward to hide my present situation from you. I have not for a moment forgotten that I am bound to you; through all my wanderings I have always remembered the little wooden bench——”

Eugénie started up as if she were sitting on burning coals, and sat down on one of the broken stone steps in the yard.

—“the little wooden bench where we vowed to love each other forever; the passage, the gray parlor, my attic room, the night when in your thoughtfulness and tact you made my future easier to me. Yes, these memories have been my support; I have said in my heart that you were always thinking of me when I thought of you at the hour we had agreed upon. Did you not look out into the darkness at nine o'clock? Yes, I am sure you did. I would not prove false to so sacred a friendship; I cannot deal insincerely with you.

“A marriage has been proposed to me, which is in every

way satisfactory to my mind. Love in a marriage is romantic nonsense. Experience has clearly shown me that in marrying we must obey social laws and conform to conventional ideas. There is some difference of age between you and me, which would perhaps be more likely to affect your future than mine, and there are other differences of which I need not speak; your bringing up, your ways of life, and your tastes have not fitted you for Parisian life, nor would they harmonize with the future which I have marked out for myself. For instance, it is a part of my plan to maintain a great household, and to see a good deal of society; and you, I am sure, from my recollections of you, would prefer a quiet, domestic life and home-keeping ways. No, I will be open with you; I will abide by your decision; but I must first, however, lay all the facts of the case before you, that you may the better judge.

“I possess at the time of writing an income of eighty thousand livres. With this fortune I am able to marry into the d’Aubrion family; I should take their name on my marriage with their only daughter, a girl of nineteen, and secure at the same time a very brilliant position in society, and the post of gentleman-of-the-bedchamber. I will assure you at once, my dear cousin, that I have not the slightest affection for Mlle. d’Aubrion, but by this marriage I shall secure for my children a social rank which will be of inestimable value in the future. Monarchical principles are daily gaining ground. A few years hence my son, the Marquis d’Aubrion, would have an entailed estate and a yearly rental of forty thousand livres; with such advantages there would be no position to which he might not aspire. We ought to live for our children.

“You see, my cousin, how candidly I am laying the state of my heart, my hopes, and my fortunes before you. Perhaps after seven years of separation you may yourself have forgotten our childish love affair, but I have never forgotten your goodness or my promise. A less conscientious, a less upright man, with a heart less youthful than mine, might scarcely feel himself bound by it; but for me a promise, however lightly given, is sacred. When I tell you plainly

that my marriage is solely a marriage of suitability, and that I have not forgotten the love of our youthful days, am I not putting myself entirely into your hands, and making you the arbitress of my fate? Is it not implied that if I must renounce my social ambitions, I shall willingly content myself with the simple and pure happiness which is always called up by the thought of you——”

“Tra-la-la-tan-ta-ti!” sang Charles Grandet to the air of *Non più Andrai*, as he signed himself,

“Your devoted cousin,

“CHARLES.”

“By Jove! that is acting handsomely,” he said to himself. He looked about him for the check, slipped it in, and added a postscript.

“P. S.—I inclose a check on Mme. des Grassins for eight thousand francs, payable in gold to your order, comprising the capital and interest of the sum you were so kind to advance me. I am expecting a case from Bordeaux which contains a few things which you must allow me to send you as a token of my unceasing gratitude. You can send my dressing-case by the diligence to the Hôtel d’Aubrion, Rue Hillerin-Bertin.”

“By the diligence!” cried Eugénie, “when I would have given my life for it a thousand times!”

Terrible and complete shipwreck of hope; the vessel had gone down, there was not a spar, not a plank in the vast ocean. There are women who when their lover forsakes them will drag him from a rival’s arms and murder her, and fly for refuge to the ends of the earth, to the scaffold, or the grave. There is a certain grandeur in this no doubt; there is something so sublime in the passion of indignation which prompts the crime, that man’s justice is awed into silence; but there are other women who suffer and bow their heads. They go on their way, submissive and broken-hearted, weeping and forgiving, praying till their last sigh for him whom they never forget. And this no less is love, love such as

the angels know, love that bears itself proudly in anguish, that lives by the secret pain of which it dies at last. This was to be Eugénie's love now that she had read that horrible letter.

She raised her eyes to the sky and thought of her mother's prophetic words, uttered in the moment of clear vision that is sometimes given to dying eyes; and as she thought of her mother's life and death, it seemed to her that she was looking out over her own future. There was nothing left to her now but to live prayerfully till the day of her deliverance should come and the soul spread its wings for heaven.

"My mother was right," she said, weeping. "Suffer—and die."

She went slowly from the garden into the house, avoiding the passage; but when she came into the old gray parlor, it was full of memories of her cousin. On the chimney-piece there stood a certain china saucer, which she used every morning, and the old Sèvres sugar basin.

It was to be a memorable and eventful day for Eugénie. Nanon announced the curé of the parish church. He was related to the Cruchots, and therefore in the interests of the President de Bonfons. For some days past the Abbé had urged the curé to speak seriously to Mlle. Grandet about the duty of marriage from a religious point of view for a woman in her position. Eugénie, seeing her pastor, fancied that he had come for the thousand francs which she gave him every month for the poor of his parish, and sent Nanon for the money; but the curate began with a smile, "To-day, mademoiselle, I have come to take counsel with you about a poor girl in whom all Saumur takes an interest, and who, through lack of charity to herself, is not living as a Christian should."

"*Mon Dieu!* M. le Curé, just now I can think of nobody but myself. I am very miserable, my only refuge is in the Church; her heart is large enough to hold all human sorrows, her love so inexhaustible that we need never fear to drain it dry."

"Well, mademoiselle, when we speak of this girl, we shall speak of you. Listen! If you would fain work out your

salvation, there are but two ways open to you: you must either leave the world or live in the world and submit to its laws—you must choose between the earthly and the heavenly vocation.”

“Ah! your voice speaks to me when I need to hear a voice. Yes, God has sent you to me. I will bid the world farewell, and live for God alone, in silence and seclusion.”

“But, my daughter, you should think long and prayerfully before taking so strong a measure. Marriage is life; the veil and the convent is death.”

“Yes, death. Ah! if death would only come quickly, M. le Curé,” she said, with dreadful eagerness.

“Death? But you have great obligations to fulfill towards society, mademoiselle. There is your family of poor, to whom you give clothes and firing in winter and work in summer. Your great fortune is a loan, of which you must give account one day. You have always looked on it as a sacred trust. It would be selfish to bury yourself in a convent, and you ought not to live alone in the world. In the first place, how can you endure the burden of your vast fortune alone? You might lose it. You will be involved in endless litigation; you will find yourself in difficulties from which you will not be able to extricate yourself. Take your pastor’s word, a husband is useful; you ought not to lose what God has given into your charge. I speak to you as to a cherished lamb of my flock. You love God too sincerely to find hindrances to your salvation in the world; you are one of its fairest ornaments, and should remain in it as an example of holiness.”

At this point Mme. des Grassins was announced. The banker’s wife was smarting under a grievous disappointment, and thirsted for revenge.

“Mademoiselle——” she began. “Oh! M. le Curé is here—I will say no more then. I came to speak about some matters of business, but I see you are deep in something else.”

“Madame,” said the curé, “I leave the field to you.”

“Oh! M. le Curé, pray come back again; I stand in great need of your help just now.”

"Yes, indeed, my poor child!" said Mme. des Grassins.

"What do you mean?" asked Eugénie and the curé both together.

"Do you suppose that I haven't heard that your cousin has come back, and is going to marry Mlle. d'Aubrion? A woman doesn't go about with her wits in her pocket."

Eugénie was silent, there was a red flush on her face, but she made up her mind at once that henceforward no one should learn anything from her, and looked as impenetrable as her father used to do.

"Well, madame," she said, with a tinge of bitterness in her tones, "it seems that I, at any rate, carry my wits in my pocket, for I am quite at a loss to understand you. Speak out and explain yourself; you can speak freely before M. le Curé, he is my director, as you know."

"Well, then, mademoiselle, see for yourself what des Grassins says. Here is the letter."

Eugénie read—

"MY DEAR WIFE:—Charles Grandet has returned from the Indies, and has been in Paris these two months——"

"Two months!" said Eugénie to herself, and her hand fell to her side. After a moment she went on reading—

"I had to dance attendance on him, and called twice before the future Comte d'Aubrion would condescend to see me. All Paris is talking about his marriage, and the banns are published——"

"And he wrote to me after that?" Eugénie said to herself. She did not round off the sentence as a Parisienne would have done, with "Wretch that he is!" but her scorn was not one whit the less because it was unexpressed.

—"but it will be a good while yet before he marries; it is not likely that the Marquis d'Aubrion will give his daughter to the son of a bankrupt wine merchant. I called and told him of all the trouble we had been at, his uncle and I, in the matter of his father's failure, and of our clever dodges

that had kept the creditors quiet so far. The insolent puppy had the effrontery to say to me—to *me*, who for five years have toiled day and night in his interest and to save his credit—that *his father's affairs were not his!* A solicitor would have wanted thirty or forty thousand francs of him in fees at the rate of one per cent. on the total of the debt! But, patience! There is something that he does owe, however, and that the law shall make him pay, that is to say, twelve hundred thousand francs to his father's creditors, and I shall declare his father bankrupt. I mixed myself up in this affair on the word of that old crocodile of a Grandet, and I have given promises in the name of the family. M. le Comte d'Aubriion may not care for his honor, but I care a good deal for mine! So I shall just explain my position to the creditors. Still, I have too much respect for Mlle. Eugénie (with whom, in happier days, we hoped to be more closely connected) to take any steps before you have spoken to her——”

There Eugénie paused, and quietly returned the letter.

“I am obliged to you,” she said to Mme. des Grassins. “*We shall see——*”

“Your voice was exactly like your father's just then,” exclaimed Mme. des Grassins.

“Madame,” put in Nanon, producing Charles's check, “you have eight thousand francs to pay us.”

“True. Be so good as to come with me, Mme. Cornoiller.”

“M. le Curé,” said Eugénie, with a noble composure that came of the thought which prompted her, “would it be a sin to remain in a state of virginity after marriage?”

“It is a case of conscience which I cannot solve. If you care to know what the celebrated Sanchez says in his great work, *De Matrimonio*, I could inform you to-morrow.”

The curé took leave. Mlle. Grandet went up to her father's room and spent the day there by herself; she would not even come down to dinner, though Nanon begged and scolded. She appeared in the evening at the hour when the usual company began to arrive. The gray parlor in the

Grandets' house had never been so well filled as it was that night. Every soul in the town knew by that time of Charles's return, and of his faithlessness and ingratitude; but their inquisitive curiosity was not to be gratified. Eugénie was a little late, but no one saw any traces of the cruel agitation through which she had passed; she could smile benignly in reply to the compassionate looks and words which some of the group thought fit to bestow on her; she bore her pain behind a mask of politeness.

About nine o'clock the card-players drew away from the tables, paid their losses, and criticised the game and the various points that had been made. Just as there was a general move in the direction of the door, an unexpected development took place; the news of it rang through Saumur and four prefectures round about for days after.

"Please stay, M. le Président."

There was not a person in the room who did not thrill with excitement at the words; M. de Bonfons, who was about to take his cane, turned quite white, and sat down again.

"The president takes the millions," said Mlle. de Gribeau-court.

"It is quite clear that President de Bonfons is going to marry Mlle. Grandet," cried Mme. d'Orsonval.

"The best trick of the game!" commented the Abbé.

"A very pretty *slam*," said the notary.

Everyone said his say and cut his joke, everyone thought of the heiress mounted upon her millions as if she were on a pedestal. Here was the catastrophe of the drama, begun nine years ago, taking place under their eyes. To tell the president in the face of all Saumur to "stay" was as good as announcing at once that she meant to take the magistrate for her husband. Social conventionalities are rigidly observed in little country towns, and such an infraction as this was looked upon as a binding promise.

"M. le Président," Eugénie began in an unsteady voice, as soon as they were alone, "I know what you care about in me. Swear to leave me free till the end of my life, to claim none of the rights which marriage will give you over

me, and my hand is yours. Oh!" she said, seeing him about to fall on his knees, "I have not finished yet. I must tell you frankly that there are memories in my heart which can never be effaced; that friendship is all that I can give my husband; I wish neither to affront him nor to be disloyal to my own heart. But you shall only have my hand and fortune at the price of an immense service which I want you to do me."

"Anything, I will do anything," said the president.

"Here are fifteen hundred thousand francs, M. le Président," she said, drawing from her bodice a certificate for a hundred shares in the Bank of France; "will you set out for Paris? You must not even wait till the morning, but go at once, to-night. You must go straight to M. des Grassins, ask him for a list of my uncle's creditors, call them together, and discharge all outstanding claims upon Guillaume Grandet's estate. Let the creditors have capital and interest at five per cent. from the day the debts were contracted to the present time; and see that in every case a receipt in full is given, and that it is made out in proper form. You are a magistrate, you are the only person whom I feel that I can trust in such a case. You are a gentleman and a man of honor; you have given me your word, and, protected by your name, I will make the perilous voyage of life. We shall know how to make allowances for each other, for we have been acquainted for so long that it is almost as if we were related, and I am sure you would not wish to make me unhappy."

The president fell on his knees at the feet of the rich heiress in a paroxysm of joy.

"I will be your slave!" he said.

"When all the receipts are in your possession, sir," she went on, looking quietly at him, "you must take them, together with the bills, to my cousin Grandet, and give them to him with this letter. When you come back, I will keep my word."

The president understood the state of affairs perfectly well. "She is accepting me out of pique," he thought, and he hastened to do Mlle. Grandet's bidding with all possible

speed, for fear some chance might bring about a reconciliation between the lovers.

As soon as M. de Bonfons left her, Eugénie sank into her chair and burst into tears. All was over, and *this* was the end.

The president traveled post-haste to Paris and reached his journey's end on the following evening. The next morning he went to des Grassins, and arranged for a meeting of the creditors in the office of the notary with whom the bills had been deposited. Every man of them appeared, every man of them was punctual to a moment—one should give even creditors their dues.

M. de Bonfons, in Mlle. Grandet's name, paid down the money in full, both capital and interest. They were paid interest! It was an amazing portent, a nine days' wonder in the business world of Paris. After the whole affair had been wound up, and when, by Eugénie's desire, des Grassins had received fifty thousand francs for his services, the president betook himself to the Hôtel d'Aubrion, and was lucky enough to find Charles at home, and in disgrace with his future father-in-law. The old Marquis had just informed that gentleman that until Guillaume Grandet's creditors were satisfied, a marriage with his daughter was not to be thought of.

To Charles, thus despondent, the president delivered the following letter:

“DEAR COUSIN:—M. le Président de Bonfons has undertaken to hand you a discharge of all claims against my uncle's estate, and to deliver it in person, together with this letter, so that I may know that it is safely in your hands. I heard rumors of bankruptcy, and it occurred to me that difficulties might possibly arise as a consequence in the matter of your marriage with Mlle. d'Aubrion. Yes, cousin, you are quite right about my tastes and manners; I have lived, as you say, so entirely out of the world that I know nothing of its ways or its calculations, and my companionship could never make up to you for the loss of the pleasures that you look to find in society. I hope that you will be

happy according to the social conventions to which you have sacrificed our early love. The only thing in my power to give you to complete your happiness is your father's good name. Farewell; you will always find a faithful friend in your cousin,

EUGÉNIE."

In spite of himself an exclamation broke from the man of social ambitions when his eyes fell on the discharge and receipts. The president smiled.

"We can each announce our marriage," said he.

"Oh! you are to marry Eugénie, are you? Well, I am glad to hear it; she is a kind-hearted girl. Why!" struck with a sudden luminous idea, "she must be rich?"

"Four days ago she had about nineteen millions," the president said, with a malicious twinkle in his eyes; "to-day she has only seventeen."

Charles was dumfounded; he stared at the president.

"Seventeen mil——"

"Seventeen millions. Yes, sir; when we are married, Mlle. Grandet and I shall muster seven hundred and fifty thousand livres a year between us."

"My dear cousin," said Charles, with some return of assurance, "we shall be able to push each other's fortunes."

"Certainly," said the president. "There is something else here," he added, "a little case that I was to give only in your hands," and he set down a box containing the dressing-case upon the table.

The door opened, and in came Mme. la Marquise d'Aubrion; the great lady seemed to be unaware of Cruchot's existence. "Look here! dear," she said, "never mind what that absurd M. d'Aubrion has been saying to you; the Duchesse de Chaulieu has quite turned his head. I repeat it, there is nothing to prevent your marriage——"

"Nothing, madame," answered Charles. "The three millions which my father owed were paid yesterday."

"In money?" she asked.

"In full, capital and interest; I mean to rehabilitate his memory."

"What nonsense!" cried Mme. la Marquise d'Aubrion.

"Who is this person?" she asked in Charles's ear, as she saw Cruchot for the first time.

"My man of business," he answered in a low voice. The Marquise gave M. de Bonfons a disdainful bow, and left the room.

"We are beginning to push each other's fortunes already," said the president dryly, as he took up his hat. "Good-day, cousin."

"The old cockatoo from Saumur is laughing at me; I have a great mind to make him swallow six inches of cold steel," thought Charles.

But the president had departed.

Three days later M. de Bonfons was back in Saumur again, and announced his marriage with Eugénie. After about six months he received his appointment as Councilor to the Court-Royal at Angers, and they went thither. But before Eugénie left Saumur she melted down the trinkets that had long been so sacred and so dear a trust, and gave them, together with the eight thousand francs which her cousin had returned to her, to make a reredos for the altar in the parish church whither she had gone so often to pray to God for him. Henceforward her life was spent partly at Angers, partly at Saumur. Her husband's devotion to the Government at a political crisis was rewarded; he was made President of the Chamber, and finally First President. Then he awaited a general election with impatience; he had visions of a place in the Government; he had dreams of a peerage; and then, and then——

"Then he would call cousins with the king, I suppose?" said Nanon, big Nanon, Mme. Cornoiller, wife of a burgess of Saumur, when her mistress told her of these lofty ambitions and high destinies.

Yet, after all, none of these ambitious dreams were to be realized, and the name of M. de Bonfons (he had finally dropped the patronymic Cruchot) was to undergo no further transformation. He died only eight days after his appointment as deputy of Saumur. God, who sees all hearts, and who never strikes without cause, punished him, doubtless,

for his presumptuous schemes, and for the lawyer's cunning with which, *accurante Cruchot*, he drafted his own marriage contract; in which husband and wife, *in case there was no issue of the marriage, bequeathed to each other all their property, both real estate and personalty, without exception or reservation, dispensing even with the formality of an inventory, provided that the omission of the said inventory should not injure their heirs and assigns, it being understood that this deed of gift, etc., etc.*, a clause which may throw some light on the profound respect with which the president constantly showed for his wife's desire to live apart. Women cited M. le Premier Président as one of the most delicately considerate of men, and pitied him, and often went so far as to blame Eugénie for clinging to her passion and her sorrow; mingling, according to their wont, cruel insinuations with their criticisms of the president's wife.

"If Mme. de Bonfons lives apart from her husband, she must be in very bad health, poor thing. Is she likely to recover? What can be the matter with her? Is it cancer or gastritis, or what is it? Why does she not go to Paris and see some specialist? She has looked very sallow for a long time past. How can she not wish to have a child? They say she is very fond of her husband; why not give him an heir in his position? Do you know, it is really dreadful! If it is only some notion which she has taken into her head, it is unpardonable. Poor president!"

There is a certain keen insight and quick apprehensiveness that is the gift of a lonely and meditative life—and loneliness, and sorrow, and the discipline of the last few years had given Eugénie this clairvoyance of the narrow lot. She knew within herself that the president was anxious for her death that he might be the sole possessor of the colossal fortune, now still further increased by the deaths of the Abbé and the notary, whom Providence had lately seen fit to promote from works to rewards. The poor solitary woman understood and pitied the president. Unworthy hopes and selfish calculations were his strongest motives for respecting Eugénie's hopeless passion. To give life to a child would be death to the egoistical dreams and ambitions that

the president hugged within himself; was it for all these things that his career was cut short? while she must remain in her prison house, and the coveted gold for which she cared so little was to be heaped upon her. It was she who was to live, with the thought of heaven always before her, and holy thoughts for her companions, to give help and comfort secretly to those who were in distress. Mme. de Bonfons was left a widow three years after her marriage, with an income of eight hundred thousand livres.

She is beautiful still, with the beauty of a woman who is nearly forty years of age. Her face is very pale and quiet now, and there is a tinge of sadness in the low tones of her voice. She has simple manners, all the dignity of one who has passed through great sorrows, and the saintliness of a soul unspotted by the world; and, no less, the rigidity of an old maid, the little penurious ways and narrow ideas of a dull country town.

Although she has eight hundred thousand livres a year, she lives just as she used to do in the days of stinted allowances of fuel and food while she was still Eugénie Grandet; the fire is never lighted in the parlor before or after the dates fixed by her father, all the regulations in force in the days of her girlhood are still adhered to. She dresses as her mother did. That cold, sunless, dreary house, always overshadowed by the dark ramparts, is like her own life.

She looks carefully after her affairs; her wealth accumulates from year to year; perhaps she might even be called parsimonious, if it were not for the noble use she makes of her fortune. Various pious and charitable institutions, almshouses, and orphan asylums, a richly endowed public library, and donations to various churches in Saumur, are a sufficient answer to the charge of avarice which some few people have brought against her.

They sometimes speak of her in joke as *mademoiselle*, but, in fact, people stand somewhat in awe of Mme. de Bonfons. It was as if she, whose heart went out so readily to others, was always to be the victim of their interested calculations, and to be cut off from them by a barrier of distrust; as if

for all warmth and brightness in her life she was to find only the pale glitter of metal.

"No one loves me but you," she would sometimes say to Nanon.

Yet her hands are always ready to bind the wounds that other eyes do not see, in any house; and her way to heaven is one long succession of kindness and good deeds. The real greatness of her soul has risen above the cramping influences of her early life. And this is the life-history of a woman who dwells in the world, yet is not of it; a woman so grandly fitted to be a wife and mother, but who has neither husband nor children nor kindred.

Of late the good folk of Saumur have begun to talk of a second marriage for her. Rumor is busy with her name and that of the Marquis de Froidfond; indeed, his family have begun to surround the rich widow, just as the Cruchots once flocked about Eugénie Grandet. Nanon and Cornoiller, so it is said, are in the interest of the Marquis, but nothing could be more false; for big Nanon and Cornoiller have neither of them wit enough to understand the corruptions of the world.

MODESTE MIGNON

PREFACE

Modeste Mignon occupies a very peculiar place in Balzac's works—a place, indeed, which, though for the form's sake more than anything else the author has connected it with the rest of the *Comédie* by some repetition of personages, is almost entirely isolated. I think it has puzzled some devoted Balzacians—so much so, that I have seen it omitted even from lists of his works suitable to “the young person,” in which it surely should have an eminent place. As it is distinctly late—it was written in 1844, and nothing of combined magnitude and first-class importance succeeded it except *Les Parents Pauvres*—it may not impossibly serve as a basis for the expectation that if Balzac, after his re-establishment in Paris as a wealthy personage, had received a new lease of life and vigor instead of a sentence of death, we might have had from him a series of works as different from anything that he had composed before as *Modeste Mignon* is from her sisters.

In saying this, I do not mean to put the book itself in the very first class of its author's work. It is too much of an experiment for that—of an experiment as far as the heroine is concerned, the boldness and novelty of which is likely to be under-estimated by almost any reader, unless he be a literary student who pays strict attention to times and seasons. Even in England (though Charlotte Brontë was planning her at this very time) the willful unconventional heroine was something of a novelty; and when it is remembered how infinitely stricter was the standard of the French *ingénue*, until quite recently, than it ever, even in the depths of the eighteenth century, was in England, the audacity of the conception of *Modeste* may be at least generally appreciated. And it is specially important to observe that though the author puts in Charles Mignon's mouth a vindication of the French process of tying a girl hand and foot and handing her over to the best bidder as a husband, instead of allowing her to choose for herself, *Modeste's* audacity in pursuing the opposite method is crowned with complete success, if not with success

of exactly the kind that she anticipated. Except the case of Savinien de Portenduère and Ursule Mirouët, hers is, so far as I can remember, the only example in the whole *Comédie* of a love-marriage which, as we are told, was wholly successful, without even vacillations on the wife's part or relapses on the husband's. It is true that, with a slight touch of cowardice or concession, Balzac has made Modeste half a German; but this is a very venial bowing in the porch, not the chancel, of the House of Rimmon.

Whether the young lady is as entirely successful and as entirely charming as she is undeniably audacious in conception, is not a point for equally positive pronouncement. Just as it was probably necessary for Balzac, in order not to outrage the feelings of his readers too much, to put that Teutonic strain in Modeste, so he had, in all probability, to exhibit her as capricious, and almost unamiable, in order to attain the fitness of things in connection with so terrible a young person. It is certain that even those who by no means rejoice in pattern heroines, even those who "like them rather wicked," may sometimes think Modeste nasty in her behavior to her family, to Butscha, and, perhaps, to her future husband. She is, for instance, quite wrong about the whip, which she might have refused altogether, but could not with decency accept from one person and refuse from another. But what has just been said will cover this and other petulances and outbursts. So "shoking" a young person (it is very cheerful and interesting to think how much more exactly that favorite *vox nihili* of French speech expresses French than English sentiment) could not but behave "shokingly."

Most of the minor characters are good: Butscha, a difficult and, in any case, slightly improbable personage, is, in his own way, very good indeed. It was probably necessary for Balzac, in turning the usual scheme of the French novel upside down, to provide a rather timid hero for such a masterful heroine; and it must be admitted that Ernest de la Brière is a rather preternaturally good young man. Still, he is not mawkish; and except that he should not have given Modeste quite such a valuable present, he behaves more like a gentleman in the full English sense than any other of Balzac's heroes.

The very full, very elaborate, and very unfavorable portrait of Canalis offers again much scope for difference of mere taste and opinion, without the possibility of laying down a conclusion very positively. Even if tradition were not unanimous on the subject, it would be quite certain that Canalis is a direct presentment of Lamartine, from whom he is so ostentatiously dissociated. And there can, of course, be no two opinions as to the presentment being very distinctly unfavorable—much more so than the earlier introductions of this same Canalis, which are either complimentary or colorless for the most part, though his vanity is sometimes hinted at. I do not know whether Balzac had any private quarrel with the poet, or whether Lamartine's increasing leanings towards Republicanism exasperated the always monarchical novelist. But it is certain that Canalis cuts rather a bad figure here—that Lamartine was actually supposed to have married for money—and that the whole thing has more of the nature of a personal attack than anything else in Balzac, except the outbreak against Sainte-Beuve in *Un Prince de la Bohème*.

Perhaps it should be added that the practice of correspondence between incognitas and men of letters, not unknown in any country, has been rather frequent and famous in France. The chief example is, of course, that interchange of communications between Mérimée and Mlle. Jenny Dacquín, which had such important results for literature, and such not unimportant ones for the parties concerned. Balzac himself rejoiced in a Modeste called Louise, whom, however, he seems never to have seen; and there is little doubt that Lamartine the actual was attacked, as the fictitious Canalis boasts that he was, by scores of such persons. The chief instance I can think of in which such a correspondence led to matrimony was that of Southey and his second wife Caroline Bowles.

The history of *Modeste Mignon* is short and simple. It was first given to the public in the spring and summer of 1844 by the *Journal des Débats*, and before the end of the year it appeared in four volumes, published by Roux and Cassanet. It had here seventy-five chapter divisions, with headings. In 1845, scarcely a twelvemonth after its first appearance, it took its place in the *Comédie*.

G. S.

MODESTE MIGNON

To a Polish Lady.

Daughter of an enslaved land, an angel in your love, a demon in your imagination, a child in faith, an old man in experience, a man in brain, a woman in heart, a giant in hope, a mother in suffering, a poet in your dreams, and Beauty itself withal—this work, in which your love and your fancy, your faith, your experience, your suffering, your hopes, and your dreams, are like chains by which hangs a web less lovely than the poetry cherished in your soul—the poetry whose expression when it lights up your countenance is, to those who admire you, what the characters of a lost language are to the learned—this work is yours.

De Balzac.

IN the beginning of October 1829, Monsieur Simon-Babylas Latournelle, a notary, was walking up the hill from le Havre to Ingouville arm in arm with his son, and accompanied by his wife. By her, like a page, came the notary's head-clerk, a little hunchback named Jean Butscha. When these four persons—of whom two at least mounted by the same way every evening—reached the turn in the zigzag road (like what the Italians call a Cornice), the notary looked about him to see whether anyone might overhear him from some garden terrace above or below, and as an additional precaution he spoke low.

“Exupère,” said he to his son, “try to carry out in an intelligent manner, without guessing at the meaning, a little maneuver I will explain to you; and even if you have a suspicion, I desire you will fling it into the Styx which every notary or law-student ought to keep handy for other people's secrets. After paying your respects, homage, and devoir to Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, to Monsieur and Madame

Dumay, and to Monsieur Gobenheim, if he is at the Chalet, when silence is restored, Monsieur Dumay will take you aside; look attentively—I allow you—at Mademoiselle Modeste all the time he is talking to you. My worthy friend will ask you to go out for a walk and return in about an hour, at about nine o'clock with a hurried air; try to seem quite out of breath, then whisper in his ear, but loud enough for Mademoiselle Modeste to hear: ‘The young man is coming!’ ”

Exupère was to start for Paris on the following day to begin his law studies. It was this prospect of departure which had led Latournelle to propose to his friend Dumay that his son should play the assistant in the important conspiracy which may be suspected from his instructions.

“Is Mademoiselle Modeste suspected of carrying on an intrigue?” asked Butscha timidly of his mistress.

“Hsh—Butscha!” replied Madame Latournelle, taking her husband’s arm.

Madame Latournelle, the daughter of the Registrar of the lower Court, considers herself justified by her birth in describing her family as *parliamentary*. These pretensions account for the efforts made by the lady, whose face is rather too red and rough, to assume the majesty of the tribunal whose verdicts are recorded by her father. She takes snuff, holds herself as stiff as a post, gives herself airs of importance, and looks exactly like a mummy that has been galvanized into life for a moment. She tries to give her sharp voice an aristocratic tone, but she no more succeeds in that than in concealing her defective education. Her social value is indisputable when you look at the caps she wears, bristling with flowers, the false fronts plastered on her temples, and the gowns she chooses. How could the shops get rid of such goods if it were not for such as Madame Latournelle?

This worthy woman’s absurdities might have passed almost unremarked, for she was essentially charitable and pious, but that Nature, which sometimes has its little jest by turning out these grotesque creations, gave her the figure of a drum-major so as to display the devices of her provincial mind. She has never been out of le Havre, she believes in the infallibility of le Havre, she buys everything at le Havre, and gets

her dresses there; she speaks of herself as Norman to the finger-tips, she reverences her father, and adores her husband. Little Latournelle was bold enough to marry this woman when she had attained the post-matrimonial age of thirty-three, and they contrived to have a son. As he might anywhere have won the sixty thousand francs which the Registrar had to settle, his unusual courage was set down to a wish to avoid the irruption of the Minotaur, against which his personal attractions would hardly have guaranteed him if he had been so rash as to set his house on fire by bringing home a pretty young wife. The notary had, in fact, simply discerned the good qualities of Mademoiselle Agnès—her name was Agnès—and remarked how soon a wife's beauty is a thing of the past to her husband. As to the insignificant youth to whom the Registrar gave his Norman name at the font, Madame Latournelle was so much astonished to find herself a mother at the age of thirty-five years and seven months, that she would even now find milk to suckle him withal if he needed it—the only hyberbole which can give a notion of her maternal mania.

“How handsome my boy is!” she would say to her little friend Modeste Mignon, without any ulterior motive, as she looked at him on their way to church, her beautiful Exupère leading the way.

“He is like you,” Modeste Mignon would reply, as she might have said, “What bad weather!”

This sketch of the woman, a mere accessory figure, seems necessary when it is said that Madame Latournelle had for three years past been the chaperon of the young girl for whom the notary and his friend Dumay were laying one of those snares which, in the *Physiologie du Mariage*, I have called mouse-traps.

As for Latournelle, imagine a good little man, as wily as the purest honesty will allow, but whom every stranger would take for a rogue at first sight of the singular face, to which everyone at le Havre is accustomed. Weak eyes, always red, compel the worthy lawyer to wear green spectacles to protect them. Each eyebrow, thinly marked with down, projects about a line beyond the brown tortoise-shell rim of the glasses, thus making a sort of double arch. If you never happen to

have noticed in some passer-by the effect of these two semi-circles, one above the other, and divided by a hollow, you cannot conceive how puzzling such a face may be; especially when this face is pale and haggard, and ends in a point like that of Mephistopheles, which painters have taken from the cat, and this is what Babylas Latournelle is like. Above those vile green spectacles rises a bald skull, with a wig all the more obviously artificial because it seems endowed with motion, and is so indiscreet as to show a few white hairs straggling below it all round, while it never sits straight on the forehead. As we look at this estimable Norman, dressed in black like a beetle, on two legs like pins, and know him to be the most honest soul living, we wonder, but cannot discover, what is the reason of such contradictory physiognomies.

Jean Butscha, a poor, abandoned foundling, of whom the Registrar Labrosse and his daughter had taken charge, had risen to be head-clerk by sheer hard work, and was lodged and fed by his master, who gave him nine hundred francs a year. With no appearance of youth, and almost a dwarf, he had made Modeste his idol; he would have given his life for her. This poor creature, his eyes, like two slow matches under thickened eyelids, marked by the smallpox, crushed by a mass of woolly hair, encumbered by his huge hands, had lived under the gaze of pity from the age of seven. Is not this enough to account for him in every way? Silent, reserved, exemplary in his conduct, and religious, he wandered through the vast expanse marked on the map of the realm of Love, as Love without Hope, the barren and sublime wilderness of Longing. Modeste had nicknamed this grotesque clerk "The Mysterious Dwarf." This led Butscha to read Walter Scott's romance, and he said to Modeste—

"Would you like to have a rose from your Mysterious Dwarf in case of danger?"

Modeste hurled the soul of her adorer down into its mud hovel again by one of the terrible looks which young women fling at men whom they do not like. Butscha had called himself *le clerc obscure* (the obscure clerk), not knowing that the pun dated back to the origin of coats-of-arms; but he, like his master's wife, had never been away from le Havre.

It is perhaps necessary, for the benefit of those who do not know that town, to give a word of explanation as to whither the Latournelle family were bound, the head-clerk evidently being included. Ingouville is to le Havre what Montmartre is to Paris, a high hill with the town spread at its foot; with this difference, however—that the sea and the Seine surround the town and the hill; that le Havre is permanently limited by inclosing fortifications; and finally that the mouth of the river, the port and the docks, form a scene quite unlike that offered by the fifty thousand houses of Paris.

At the foot of Montmartre an ocean of slates displays its rigid blue waves; at Ingouville you look down on what might be moving roofs stirred by the wind. This high ground, which, from Rouen to the sea, follows the course of the river, leaving a wider or narrower margin between itself and the water, contains treasures of picturesque beauty with its towns, its ravines, its valleys, and its meadows, and rose to immense value at Ingouville after 1818, from which year dates the prosperity of le Havre. This hamlet became the Auteuil, the Ville-d'Avray, the Montmorency of the merchants, who built themselves terraced villas on this amphitheater, to breathe the sea air sweetened by the flowers of their magnificent gardens. These bold speculators rest there from the fatigues of the counting-house, and the atmosphere of the closely packed houses, with no space between them—often not even a courtyard, the inevitable result of the growth of the population, the unyielding belt of the ramparts and the expansion of the docks.

And, indeed, how dreary is the heart of the town, how glad is Ingouville! The law of social development has made the suburb of Graille sprout into life like a mushroom; it is larger now than le Havre itself, clinging to the foot of the slope like a serpent. Ingouville, on the ridge, has but one street; and, as in all such places, the houses looking over the Seine have an immense advantage over those on the opposite side of the road, from which the view is shut out, though they stand like spectators, on tiptoe, to peep over the roofs. Here, however, as everywhere else, compromises have been exacted.

Some of the houses perched on the top occupy a superior position, or enjoy a right of view which compels their neighbor to keep his buildings below a certain height. Then the broken rocky soil has cuttings here and there for roads leading up the amphitheater, and through these dips, some of the plots get a glimpse of the town, the river, or the sea. Though it is not precipitous, the high ground ends rather suddenly in a cliff; from the top of the street, which zigzags up the steep slope, coombes are visible where villages are planted: Saint-Adresse, two or three Saints-who-knows-who, and coves where the sea roars. This side of Ingouville, almost deserted, is in striking contrast to the handsome villas that overlook the Seine valley. Are the gales a foe to vegetation? Do the merchants shrink from the expense of gardening on so steep a slope? Be this as it may, the traveler by steamboat is startled at finding the coast so bare and rugged to the west of Ingouville—a beggar in rags next to a rich man sumptuously clothed and perfumed.

In 1829, one of the last houses towards the sea—now, no doubt, in the middle of Ingouville—was called, perhaps is still called, the Chalet. It had been originally a gatekeeper's lodge, with a plot of garden in front. The owner of the villa to which it belonged—a house with a paddock, gardens, an aviary, hothouses, and meadows—had a fancy to bring this lodge into harmony with the splendor of his residence, and had it rebuilt in the style of an English cottage. He divided it by a low wall from the lawn, graced with flowers, borders, and the terrace of the villa, and planted a hedge close to the wall to screen it. Behind this cottage, called the Chalet in spite of all he could do, lie the kitchen garden and orchards. This Chalet—a chalet without cows or dairy—has no fence from the road but a paling, of which the wood has become invisible under a luxuriant hedge.

Now, on the other side of the road, the opposite house has a similar paling and hedge. Being built under special conditions, it allows the town to be seen from the Chalet.

This little house was the despair of Monsieur Vilquin, the owner of the villa. And this is why. The creator of this residence, where every detail loudly proclaimed, "Here mil-

lions are displayed!" had extended his grounds into the country solely, as he said, not to have his gardeners in his pocket. As soon as it was finished, the Chalet could only be inhabited by a friend.

Monsieur Mignon, the first owner, was greatly attached to his cashier, and this story will prove that Dumay fully returned the feeling; he therefore offered him this little home. Dumay, a stickler for formalities, made his master sign a lease for twelve years at three hundred francs a year; and Monsieur Mignon signed it willingly, saying, "Consider, my dear Dumay, you are binding yourself to live with me for twelve years."

In consequence of events to be here related, the estates of Monsieur Mignon, formerly the richest merchant in le Havre, were sold to Vilquin, one of his opponents on 'Change. In his delight at taking possession of the famous Villa Mignon, the purchaser forgot to ask for this lease to be canceled. Dumay, not to hinder the sale, would at that time have signed anything Vilquin might have required; but when once the sale was completed, he stuck to his lease as to a revenge. He stayed in Vilquin's pocket, in the heart of the Vilquin family, watching Vilquin, annoying Vilquin, in short, Vilquin's gad-fly. Every morning, at his window, Vilquin felt a surge of violent vexation as he saw this gem of domestic architecture, this Chalet which had cost sixty thousand francs, and which blazed like a ruby in the sunshine.

An almost exact comparison! The architect had built the cottage of the finest red bricks, pointed with white. The window frames are painted bright green, and the timbers a yellow brown. The roof projects several feet. A pretty fretwork balcony adorns the first floor, and a veranda stands out like a glass cage from the middle of the front. The ground-floor consists of a pretty drawing-room, and a dining-room divided by the bottom landing of the stairs, which are of wood designed and decorated with elegant simplicity. The kitchen is at the back of the dining-room, and behind the drawing-room is a small room which, at this time, was used by Monsieur and Madame Dumay as their bedroom. On the first floor the architect has planned two large bedrooms, each with

a dressing-room, the veranda serving as a sitting-room; and above these, in the roof, which looks like two cards leaning against each other, are two servants' rooms, each with a dormer window, attics, but fairly spacious.

Vilquin had the meanness to build a wall on the side next the kitchen garden and orchard. Since this act of vengeance, the few square yards secured to the Chalet by the lease are like a Paris garden. The outbuildings, constructed and painted to match the Chalet, back against the neighboring grounds.

The interior of this pleasant residence harmonizes with the exterior. The drawing-room, floored with polished iron-wood, is decorated with a marvelous imitation of Chinese lacquer. Myriad-colored birds, and impossibly green foliage, in fantastic Chinese drawing, stand out against a black background, in panels with gilt frames. The dining-room is completely fitted with pine-wood carved and fretted, as in the high-class peasants' houses in Russia. The little ante-room, formed by the landing, and the staircase are painted like old oak to represent Gothic decoration. The bedrooms, hung with chintz, are attractive by their costly simplicity. That in which the cashier and his wife slept is wainscoted, like the cabin of a steamship. These shipowners' vagaries account for Vilquin's fury. This ill-starred purchaser wanted to lodge his son-in-law and his daughter in the Cottage. This plan, being known to Dumay, may subsequently explain his Breton obstinacy.

The entrance to the Chalet is through a trellised iron gate, with lance-heads, standing some inches above the paling and the hedge. The little garden, of the same width as the pompous lawn beyond, was just now full of flowers—roses, dahlias, and the choicest and rarest products of the hothouse flora; for another subject of grievance to Vilquin was that the pretty little hothouse, Madame's hothouse as it was called, belongs to the Chalet, and divides the Chalet from the Villa—or connects them, if you like to say so. Dumay indemnified himself for the cares of his place by caring for the conservatory, and its exotic blossoms were one of Modeste's chief pleasures. The billiard-room of Vilquin's villa, a sort of passage room, was formerly connected with this con-

servatory by a large turret-shaped aviary, but after the wall was built which blocked out the view of the orchard, Dumay bricked up the door.

"Wall for wall!" said he.

"You and Dumay have both gone to the wall!" Vilquin's acquaintance on 'Change threw in his teeth; and every day the envied speculator was hailed with some new jest.

In 1827 Vilquin offered Dumay six thousand francs a year and ten thousand francs in compensation if he would cancel the lease; the cashier refused, though he had but a thousand crowns laid by with Gobenheim, a former clerk of his master's. Dumay is indeed a Breton whom fate has planted out in Normandy. Imagine the hatred for his tenants worked up in Vilquin, a Norman with a fortune of three million francs. What high treason to wealth to dare prove to the rich the impotence of gold! Vilquin, whose depression made him the talk of le Havre, had first offered Dumay the absolute freehold of another pretty house, but Dumay again refused. The town was beginning to wonder at this obstinacy, though many found a reason for it in the statement "Dumay is a Breton."

In fact, the cashier thought that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon would be too uncomfortable anywhere else. His two idols dwelt here in a temple worthy of them, and at least had the benefit of this sumptuous cottage, where a dethroned king might have kept up the majesty of his surroundings, a kind of decorum which is often lacking to those who have fallen. The reader will not be sorry perhaps to have made acquaintance with Modeste's home and habitual companions; for, at her age, persons and things influence the future as much as character does, if indeed the character does not derive from them certain ineffaceable impressions.

By the Latournelles' manner as they went into the Chalet, a stranger might have guessed that they came there every evening.

"Already here, sir?" said the notary, on finding in the drawing-room a young banker of the town, Gobenheim, a relation of Gobenheim-Keller, the head of the great Paris house. This young fellow, who was lividly pale—one of

those fair men with black eyes, in whose fixed gaze there is something fascinating—who was as sober in speech as in habits, dressed in black, strongly built, though as thin as a consumptive patient, was a constant visitor to his former master's family and the cashier's house, far less from affection than from interest; whist was played there at two sous a point, and evening dress was not insisted on; he took nothing but a few glasses of *eau sucrée*, and need offer no civilities in return. By his apparent devotion to the Mignons he got credit for a good heart; and it excused him from going into society in le Havre, from useless expenditure, and disturbing the arrangements of his domestic life. This youthful devotee of the Golden Calf went to bed every evening at half-past ten, and rose at five in the morning. Also, being certain of secrecy in Latournelle and Butscha, Gobenheim could analyze in their presence various knotty questions, benefit by the notary's gratuitous advice, and reduce the gossip on 'Change to its true value. This sucking gold-eater (Gobe-or, a witticism of Butscha's) was of the nature of the substances known to chemistry as absorbents. Ever since disaster had overwhelmed the house of Mignon, to which he had been apprenticed by the Kellers to learn the higher branches of maritime trade, no one at the Chalet had ever asked him to do a single thing, not even a simple commission; his answer was known beforehand. This youth looked at Modeste as he might have examined a penny lithograph.

"He is one of the pistons of the huge machine called Trade," said poor Butscha, whose wit betrayed itself by little ironies, timidly uttered.

The four Latournelles greeted, with the utmost deference, an old lady dressed in black, who did not rise from the armchair in which she sat, for both her eyes were covered with the yellow film produced by cataract. Madame Mignon may be painted in a sentence. She attracted attention at once by the august expression of those mothers whose blameless life is a challenge to the strokes of fate, though fate has taken them as a mark for its shafts, who form the large class of Niobes. Her white wig, well curled and well put

on, became her cold white face, like those of the burgo-masters' wives painted by Mirevelt. The extreme neatness of her dress—velvet boots, a lace collar, a shawl put on straight—bore witness to Modeste's tender care for her mother.

When a minute's silence—as predicted by the notary—reigned in the pretty room, Modeste, seated by her mother, for whom she was embroidering a kerchief, was for a moment the center of all eyes. This inquisitiveness, concealed under the commonplace questions always asked by callers, even those who meet every day, might have betrayed the little domestic plot against the girl, even to an indifferent person; but Gobenheim, more than indifferent, noticed nothing; he lighted the candles on the card-table. Dumay's attitude made the situation a terrible one for Butscha, for the Latournelles, and, above all, for Madame Dumay, who knew that her husband was capable of shooting Modeste's lover as if he were a mad dog. After dinner, the cashier had gone out for a walk, taking with him two magnificent Pyrenean dogs, whom he suspected of treason, and had, therefore, left with a farmer, formerly a tenant of Monsieur Mignon's; then, a few minutes before the Latournelles had come in, he had brought his pistols from their place by his bed, and had laid them on the chimney-shelf, without letting Modeste see it. The young girl paid no attention to all these arrangements—strange, to say the least of it.

Though short, thick-set, and battered, with a low voice, and an air of listening to his own words, this Breton, formerly a lieutenant in the Guard, has determination and presence of mind so plainly stamped on his features, that, in twenty years, no man in the army had ever tried to make game of him. His eyes, small and calmly blue, are like two specks of steel. His manners, the expression of his face, his mode of speech, his gait, all suit his short name of Dumay. His strength, which is well known, secures him against any offense. He can kill a man with a blow of his fist; and, in fact, achieved this doughty deed at Botzen, where he found himself in the rear of his company, without any weapon, and face to face with a Saxon.

At this moment, the man's set but gentle countenance was sublimely tragical; his lips, as pale as his face, betrayed convulsive fury subdued by Breton determination; his brow was damp with slight perspiration, visible to all, and understood to be a cold moisture. The notary knew that the upshot of all this might be a scene in an assize court. In fact, the cashier was playing a game for Modeste's sake, where honor, fidelity, and feelings of far more importance than any social ties, were at stake; and it was the outcome of one of those compacts of which, in the event of fatal issues, none but God can be the judge. Most dramas lie in the ideas we form of things. The events which seem to us dramatic are only such as our soul turns to tragedy or comedy, as our own nature tends.

Madame Latournelle and Madame Dumay, charged with keeping watch over Modeste, both had an indescribable artificial manner, a quaver in their voice, which the object of their suspicions did not notice, she seemed so much absorbed by her work. Modeste laid each strand of cotton with an accuracy that might be the envy of any embroiderer. Her face showed the pleasure she derived from the satin stitch petal that put the finish to a flower. The hunchback, sitting between Madame Latournelle and Gobenheim, was swallowing tears and wondering how he could get round to Modeste, and whisper two words of warning in her ear. Madame Latournelle, by placing herself in front of Madame Mignon, had cut off Modeste, with the diabolical ingenuity of a pious prude. Madame Mignon, silent, blind, and whiter than her usual pallor, plainly betrayed her knowledge of the ordeal to which the girl was to be subjected. Now, at the last moment, perhaps she disapproved of the stratagem, though deeming it necessary. Hence her silence. She was weeping in her heart. Exupère, the trigger of the trap, knew nothing whatever of the piece in which chance had cast him for a part. Gobenheim was as indifferent as Modeste herself seemed to be—a consequence of his nature.

To a spectator in the secret, the contrast between the utter ignorance of one-half of the party, and the tremulous tension of the others, would have been thrilling. In these days, more

than ever, novel-writers deal largely in such effects; and they are in their rights, for nature has at all times outdone their skill. In this case, as you will see, social nature—which is nature within nature—was allowing itself the pleasure of making fact more interesting than romance, just as torrents produce effects forbidden to painters, and achieve marvels by arranging or polishing stones so that architects and sculptors are amazed.

It was eight o'clock. At this season of the year it is the hour of the last gleam of twilight. That evening the sky was cloudless, the mild air caressed the earth, flowers breathed their fragrance, the grinding gravel could be heard under the feet of persons returning from their walk. The sea shone like a mirror.

There was 'so little wind that the candles on the table burned with a steady flame though the windows were half open. The room, the evening, the house—what a setting for the portrait of this young creature, who at the moment was being studied by her friends with the deep attention of an artist gazing at *Margherita Doni*, one of the glories of the Pitti palace. Was Modeste, a flower enshrined like that of Catullus, worthy of all these precautions?—You have seen the cage: this is the bird.

At the age of twenty, slender and delicately made, like one of the Sirens invented by English painters to grace a Book of Beauty, Modeste, like her mother before her, bears the engaging expression of a grace little appreciated in France, where it is called sentimentality, though among the Germans it is the poetry of the heart suffusing the surface, and displayed in affectation by simpletons, in exquisite manners by sensible girls. Her most conspicuous feature was her pale gold hair, which classed her with the women called, no doubt in memory of Eve, *blondes celestes*, heavenly fair, whose sheeny skin looks like silk paper laid over the flesh, shivering in the winter or reveling in the sunshine of a look, and making the hand envious of the eye. Under this hair, as light as marabout feathers, and worn in ringlets, the brow, so purely formed that it might have been drawn by compasses, is reserved and calm to placidity, though bright with thought;

but when or where could a smoother one be found, or more transparently frank? It seems to have a luster like pearl. Her eyes, of grayish blue, as clear as those of a child, have all a child's mischief and innocence, in harmony with the arch of eyebrows scarcely outlined, as lightly touched in as those painted in Chinese faces. This playful innocence is accentuated by nacreous tones, with blue veins round the eyes and on the temples, a peculiarity of those delicate complexions. Her face, of the oval so often seen in Raphael's Madonnas, is distinguished by the cool, maidenly flush of her cheeks, as tender as a China rose, on which the long lashes of her transparent eyelids cast a play of light and shade. Her throat, bent over her work, and slender to fragility, suggests the sweeping lines dear to Leonardo. A few freckles, like the patches of the past century, show that Modeste is a daughter of earth, and not one of the creations seen in dreams by the Italian School of Angelico. Lips, full but finely curved, and somewhat satirical in expression, betray a love of pleasure. Her shape, pliant without being frail, would not scare away motherhood, like that of girls who seek to triumph through the unhealthy pressure of stays. Buckram, steel, and stay-lace never improved or formed such serpentine lines of elegance, resembling those of a young poplar swayed by the wind. A pearl-gray dress, long in the waist, and trimmed with cherry-colored gimp, accentuated the pure bust and covered the shoulders, still somewhat thin, over a deep muslin tucker, which betrayed only the outline of the curves where the bosom joins the shoulders. At the sight of this countenance, at once vague and intelligent, with a singular touch of determination given to it by a straight nose with rosy nostrils and firmly-cut outlines—a countenance where the poetry of an almost mystical brow was belied by the voluptuous curve of the mouth—where, in the changing depths of the eyes, candor seemed to fight for the mastery with the most accomplished irony—an observer might have thought that this young girl, whose quick ear caught every sound, whose nose was open to the fragrance of the blue flower of the ideal, must be the arena of a struggle between the poetry that plays round the daily rising of

the sun and the labors of the day, between fancy and reality. Modeste was both curious and modest, knowing her fate, and purely chaste, the virgin of Spain rather than of Raphael.

She raised her head on hearing Dumay say to Exupère, "Come here, young man," and seeing them talk together in a corner of the room, she fancied it was about some commission for Paris. She looked at the friends who surrounded her as if astonished at their silence, and exclaimed with a perfectly natural air—

"Well, are you not going to play?" pointing to the green table that Madame Latournelle called the altar.

"Let us begin," said Dumay, after dismissing Exupère.

"Sit there, Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle, placing the table between the clerk and the group formed by Madame Mignon and her daughter.

"And you—come here," said Dumay to his wife, desiring her to stay near him.

Madame Dumay, a little American of six-and-thirty, secretly wiped away her tears; she was devoted to Modeste, and dreaded a catastrophe.

"You are not lively this evening," said Modeste.

"We are playing," said Gobenheim, sorting his hand.

However interesting the situation may seem, it will be far more so when Dumay's position with regard to Modeste is explained. If the brevity of the style makes the narrative dry, this will be forgiven for the sake of hastening to the end of this scene, and of the need, which rules all dramas, for setting forth the argument.

Dumay—Anne-François-Bernard—born at Vannes, went as a soldier in 1799, joining the army of Italy. His father, a president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, had distinguished himself by so much vigor that the country was too hot to hold the son when his father, a second-rate lawyer, perished on the scaffold after the 9th of Thermidor. His mother died of grief; and Anne, having sold everything he possessed, went off to Italy at the age of twenty-two, just as our armies were defeated. In the department of the Var he met

a young man who, for similar reasons, was also in search of glory, thinking the battlefield less dangerous than Provence.

Charles Mignon, the last survivor of the family to whom Paris owes the street and the hôtel built by Cardinal Mignon, had for his father a crafty man, who wished to save his estate of la Bastie, a nice little fief under the Counts of Provence, from the clutches of the Revolution. Like all nervous people in those days, the Comte de la Bastie, now Citizen Mignon, thought it healthier to cut off other heads than to lose his own. This supposed terrorist vanished on the 9th of Thermidor, and was thenceforth placed on the list of *émigrés*. The fief of la Bastie was sold. The pepper-caster towers of the dishonored château were razed to the ground. Finally, Citizen Mignon himself, discovered at Orange, was killed with his wife and children, with the exception of Charles Mignon, whom he had sent in search of a refuge in the department of the Hautes-Alpes. Charles, stopped by these shocking tidings, awaited quieter times in a valley of Mont Genève. There he lived till 1799 on a few louis his father had put into his hands at parting. At last, when he was three-and-twenty, with no fortune but his handsome person—the southern beauty which, in its perfection, is a glorious thing, the type of Antinous, Hadrian's famous favorite—he resolved to stake his Provençal daring on the red field of war, regarding his courage as a vocation, as did many another. On his way to headquarters at Nice he met the Breton.

The two infantrymen, thrown together by the similarity of their destiny and the contrast of their nature, drank of the torrent from the same cup, divided their allowance of biscuit, and were sergeants by the time peace was signed after the battle of Marengo.

When war broke out again, Charles Mignon got leave to be transferred to the cavalry, and then lost sight of his comrade. The last of the Mignons of la Bastie was, in 1812, an officer of the Legion of Honor, and Major of a cavalry regiment, hoping to be reinstated as Comte de la Bastie and made Colonel by the Emperor. Then, taken prisoner by the Russians, he was sent with many more to

Siberia. His traveling companion was a poor lieutenant, in whom he recognized Anne Dumay, with no decoration, brave indeed, but hapless, like the millions of rank-and-file with worsted epaulettes, the web of men on which Napoleon painted the picture of his Empire. In Siberia, to pass the time, the lieutenant-colonel taught his comrade arithmetic and writing, for education had seemed unimportant to his Scævola parent. Charles found in his first traveling companion one of those rare hearts to whom he could pour out all his griefs while confiding all his joys.

The Provençal had, ere this, met the fate which awaits every handsome young fellow. In 1804, at Frankfort-or-the-Main, he was adored by Bettina Wallenrod, the only daughter of a banker, and married her with all the more enthusiasm because she was rich, one of the beauties of the town, and he was still only a lieutenant with no fortune but the most uncertain prospects of a soldier of that time. Old Wallenrod, a decayed German baron—bankers are always barons—was enchanted to think that the handsome lieutenant was the sole representative of the Mignons of la Bastie, and approved the affections of the fair Bettina, whom a painter—for there was a painter at Frankfort—had taken for his model of an ideal figure of Germany. Wallenrod, who already thought of his grandsons as Comtes de la Bastie-Wallenrod, invested in the French funds a sufficient sum to secure to his daughter thirty thousand francs a year. This dower made a very small hole in his coffers, seeing how small a capital was required. The Empire, following a practice not uncommon among debtors, rarely paid the half-yearly dividends. Charles, indeed, was somewhat alarmed at this investment, for he had not so much faith in the Imperial Eagle as the German baron had. The phenomenon of belief, or of admiration, which is only a transient form of belief, can hardly exist in illicit companionship with the idol. An engineer dreads the machine which the traveler admires, and Napoleon's officers were the stokers of his locomotive when they were not the fuel. Baron von Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild then promised to help the young people. Charles loved Bettina Wallenrod as much as she loved him, and that is saying

a great deal; but when a Provençal is fired, anything seems natural to him in the matter of feeling. How could he help worshipping a golden-haired woman who had stepped out of a picture by Albert Dürer, an angel of good temper, with a fortune famous in Frankfort?

So Charles had four children, of whom only two daughters were alive at the time when he poured out his sorrows on the Breton's heart. Without knowing them, Dumay was fond of these two little girls, the effect of the sympathy so well understood by Charlet, who shows us the soldier as fatherly to every child. The elder, named Bettina Caroline, was born in 1805; the second, Marie Modeste, in 1808. The unhappy lieutenant-colonel, having had no news of those he loved, came back on foot in 1814, with the lieutenant for his companion, all across Russia and Prussia. The two friends, for whom any difference of rank had ceased to exist, arrived at Frankfort just as Napoleon landed at Cannes. Charles found his wife at Frankfort, but in mourning; she had had the grief of losing the father who adored her, and who longed always to see her smiling, even by his deathbed. Old Wallenrod did not survive the overthrow of the Empire. At the age of seventy-two he had speculated largely in cotton, believing still in Napoleon's genius, and not knowing that genius is as often the slave of events as their master.

The last of the Wallenrods, the true Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild, had bought almost as many bales of cotton as the Emperor had sacrificed men during his tremendous campaign in France.

"I am tying in cotton" (I am dying in clover), said this father to his daughter, for he was of the Goriot species, trying to beguile her of her grief, which terrified him, "and I tie owing nothing to nobody,"—and the Franco-German died struggling with the French language his daughter loved.

Charles Mignon, happy to have saved his wife and daughters from this double shipwreck, now returned to Paris, where the Emperor made him Lieutenant-Colonel of the Cuirassiers of the Guard, and Commander of the Legion of Honor. The Colonel at last was General and Count, after Napoleon's first success; but his dream was drowned in torrents of blood at

Waterloo. He was slightly wounded, and retired to the Loire, leaving Tours before the troops were disbanded.

In the spring of 1816 Charles realized the capital of his thirty thousand francs a year, which gave him about four hundred thousand francs, and decided on going to make his fortune in America, leaving a country where persecution already pressed hardly on Napoleon's soldiers. He went from Paris to le Havre, accompanied by Dumay, whose life he had saved in one of the frequent chances of war, by taking him behind him on his horse in the confusion that ended the day of Waterloo. Dumay shared the Colonel's opinions and despondency. Charles, to whom the Breton clung like a dog, for the poor infantryman worshiped the two little girls, thought that Dumay's habits of obedience and discipline, his honesty and his attachment, would make him a servant not less faithful than useful. He therefore proposed to him to take service under him in private life. Dumay was very happy to find himself adopted into a family with whom he hoped to live like mistletoe on an oak.

While awaiting an opportunity of sailing, choosing among the ships, and meditating on the chances offered in the various ports of their destination, the Colonel heard rumors of the splendid fortunes that the peace held in store for le Havre. While listening to a discussion between two of the natives, he saw a means of making his fortune, and set up forthwith as a shipowner, a banker, and a country gentleman. He invested two hundred thousand francs in land and houses, and freighted a ship for New York with a cargo of French silks bought at Lyons at a low figure. Dumay sailed on the vessel as his agent. While the Colonel was settling himself with his family in the handsomest house in the Rue Royale, and studying the science of banking with all the energy and prodigious acumen of a Provençal, Dumay made two fortunes, for he returned with a cargo of cotton bought for a mere song. This transaction produced an enormous capital for Mignon's business. He then purchased the villa at Ingouville, and rewarded Dumay by giving him a small house in the Rue Royale.

The worthy Breton had brought back with him from New

York with his bales a pretty little wife, who had been chiefly attracted by his nationality as a Frenchman. Miss Grummer owned about four thousand dollars, twenty thousand francs, which Dumay invested in his Colonel's business. Dumay, now the *alter ego* of the shipowner, very soon learned book-keeping, the science which, to use his phrase, distinguished the sergeant-majors of trade. This guileless soldier, whom fortune had neglected for twenty years, thought himself the happiest man in the world when he saw himself master of a house—which his employer's munificence furnished very prettily—of twelve hundred francs a year of interest on his capital, and of three thousand six hundred francs in salary. Never in his dreams had Lieutenant Dumay hoped for such prosperity; but he was even happier in feeling himself the hub of the richest merchant's house in le Havre.

Madame Dumay had the sorrow of losing all her children at their birth, and the disasters of her last confinement left her no hope of having any; she therefore attached herself to the two Mignon girls as affectionately as Dumay, who would not have loved his own children so well. Madame Dumay, the child of agriculturists, accustomed to a thrifty life, found two thousand four hundred francs enough for herself and her housekeeping. Thus, year by year, Dumay put two thousand and some hundred francs into the Mignon concern. When the master made up the annual balance, he added to the cashier's credit a bonus in proportion to the business done. In 1824 the sum to the cashier's account amounted to fifty-eight thousand francs. Then it was that Charles Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, a title that was never mentioned, crowned his cashier's joy by giving him a lease of the Chalet, where we now find Modeste and her mother.

Madame Mignon's deplorable condition had its cause in the catastrophe to which Charles's absence was due, for her husband had left her a still handsome woman. It had taken three years of sorrow to destroy the gentle German lady, but it was one of those sorrows which are like a worm lying at the heart of a fine fruit. The sum-total of her woes is easily stated: Two children who died young had stamped a double *ci-gît* on a soul which could never forget. Charles's

captivity in Siberia had been to this loving heart a daily death. The disasters of the great Wallenrod house, and the unhappy banker's death on his empty money-bags, coming in the midst of Bettina's suspense about her husband, was a final blow. The joy of seeing him again almost killed this German floweret. Then came the second overthrow of the Empire, and their plans for emigration had been like relapses of the same fit of fever.

At last ten years of constant prosperity, the amusements of her home-life, the handsomest house in le Havre, the dinners, balls, and entertainments given by the successful merchant, the magnificence of the Villa Mignon, the immense respect and high esteem enjoyed by her husband, with the undivided affection of this man, who responded to perfect love by love equally perfect,—all these had reconciled the poor woman to life.

Then, at the moment when all her doubts were at rest, and she looked forward to a calm evening after her stormy day, a mysterious disaster, buried in the heart of the double household, and presently to be related, came like a summons from misfortune. In 1826, in the midst of a party, when all the town was ready to return Charles Mignon as its deputy, three letters, from New York, London, and Paris, came like three hammer-strokes on the glass house of Prosperity. In ten minutes ruin swooped down with vulture's wings on this unheard-of good fortune, like the frost on the Grande Armée in 1812. In one night which he spent with Dumay over the books, Charles Mignon was prepared for the worst. Everything he possessed, not excepting the furniture, would avail to pay everybody.

"Le Havre," said the Colonel to the Lieutenant, "shall never see me in the mud. Dumay, I will take your sixty thousand francs at six per cent.—"

"At three, Colonel."

"At nothing, then," said Charles peremptorily. "I make you my partner in my new enterprise. The *Modeste*, which is no longer mine, sails to-morrow; the captain takes me with him. You—I place you in charge of my wife and daughter. I shall never write. No news is good news."

Dumay, still but a lieutenant, had not asked his Colonel by a word what his purpose was.

"I suspect," said he to Latournelle with a knowing air, "that the Colonel has laid his plans."

On the following morning, at break of day, he saw his master safe on board the good ship *Modeste*, bound for Constantinople. Standing on the vessel's poop, the Breton said to the Provençal—

"What are your last orders, Colonel?"

"That no man ever goes near the Chalet!" cried the father, with difficulty restraining a tear. "Dumay, guard my last child as a bull-dog might. Death to anyone who may try to tempt my second daughter! Fear nothing, not even the scaffold. I would meet you there!"

"Colonel, do your business in peace. I understand. You will find Mademoiselle Modeste as you leave her, or I shall be dead! You know me, and you know our two Pyrenean dogs. No one shall get at your daughter. Forgive me for using so many words."

The two soldiers embraced as men who had learnt to appreciate each other in the heart of Siberia.

The same day the *Courrier du Havre* published this terrible, simple, vigorous, and honest leading paragraph:—

"The house of Charles Mignon has suspended payment, but the undersigned liquidators pledge themselves to pay all the outstanding debts. Bearers of bills at date can at once discount them. The value of the landed estate will completely cover current accounts.

"This notice is issued for the honor of the house, and to prevent any shock to general credit on the Havre Exchange.

"Monsieur Charles Mignon sailed this morning in the *Modeste* for Asia Minor, having left a power of attorney to enable us to realize every form of property, even landed estate.

"DUMAY, liquidator for the banking account.

"LATOURNELLE, notary, liquidator for the houses and land in town and country.

"GOBENHEIM, liquidator for commercial bills."

Latournelle owed his prosperity to Monsieur Mignon's kindness; he had, in 1817, lent the notary a hundred thousand francs to buy the best business in le Havre. The poor lawyer, without any pecuniary resources, was by that time forty years old; he had been a head-clerk for ten years, and looked forward to being a clerk for the rest of his days. He was the only man in le Havre whose devotion could compare with Dumay's, for Gobenheim took advantage of this bankruptcy to carry on Mignon's connection and business, which enabled him to start his little banking concern. While universal regret was expressed on 'Change, on the Quays, and in every home; while praises of a blameless, honorable, and beneficent man were on every lip, Latournelle and Dumay, as silent and as busy as emmets, were selling, realizing, paying, and settling up. Vilquin gave himself airs of generosity, and bought the villa, the town-house, and a farm, and Latournelle took advantage of this first impulse to extract a good price from Vilquin.

Everyone wanted to call on Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, but they had obeyed Charles and taken refuge at the Chalet the very morning of his departure, of which at the first moment they knew nothing. Not to be shaken in his purpose by their grief, the courageous banker had kissed his wife and daughter in their sleep. Three hundred cards were left at the door. A fortnight later the most complete oblivion, as Charles had prophesied, showed the two women the wisdom and dignity of the step enjoined on them.

Dumay appointed representatives of his master at New York, London, and Paris. He followed up the liquidation of the three banking houses to which Mignon's ruin was due, and between 1826 and 1828 recovered five hundred thousand francs, the eighth part of Charles's fortune. In obedience to the orders drawn up the night before his departure, Dumay forwarded this sum at the beginning of 1828, through the house of Mongenod at New York, to be placed to Monsieur Mignon's credit. All this was done with military punctuality, excepting with regard to the retention of thirty thousand francs for the personal needs of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon. This, which Charles had ordered, Dumay did not

carry out. The Breton sold his house in the town for twenty-thousand francs, and gave this to Madame Mignon, reflecting that the more money his Colonel could command, the sooner he would return.

“For lack of thirty thousand francs a man sometimes is lost,” said he to Latournelle, who bought the house at his friend’s price; and there the inhabitants of the Chalet could always find rooms.

This, to the famous house of Mignon, le Havre, was the outcome of the crisis which, in 1825-26, upset the principal centers of commerce, and caused—if you remember that hurricane—the ruin of several Paris bankers, one of them the President of the Chamber of Commerce. It is intelligible that this tremendous overthrow, closing a civic reign of ten years, might have been a deathblow to Bettina Wallenrod, who once more found herself parted from her husband, knowing nothing of his fate, apparently as full of peril and adventure as Siberian exile; but the trouble that was really bringing her to the grave was to these visible griefs what an ill-starred child is to the commonplace troubles of a family—a child that gnaws and devours its home. The fatal stone that had struck this mother’s heart was a tombstone in the little cemetery of Ingouville, on which may be read:—

BETTINA CAROLINE MIGNON

AGED TWO-AND-TWENTY

PRAY FOR HER!

1827

This inscription is for the girl who lies there what many an epitaph is for the dead—a table of contents to an unknown book. Here is the book in its terrible epitome, and it may explain the pledge demanded and given in the parting words of the colonel and subaltern.

A young man, extremely handsome, named Georges d’Estourny, came to le Havre on the common pretext of seeing the sea, and he saw Caroline Mignon. A man of some pretense to fashion, and from Paris, never lacks some introduc-

tions; he was therefore invited by the intervention of a friend of the Mignons to an entertainment at Ingouville. He fell very much in love with Caroline and her fortune, and schemed for a happy issue. At the end of three months he had played every trick of the seducer, and run away with Caroline. The father of a family who has two daughters ought no more to admit a young man to his house without knowing him than he should allow books or newspapers to lie about without having read them. The innocence of a girl is like milk which is turned by a thunder-clap, by an evil smell, by a hot day, or even by a breath.

When he read his eldest daughter's farewell letter, Charles Mignon made Madame Dumay set out instantly for Paris. The family alleged the need for a change of air suddenly prescribed by the family doctor, who lent himself to this necessary pretext; but this could not keep the town from gossiping about her absence.

"What, such a strong girl, with the complexion of a Spaniard, and hair like jet!—She, consumptive!"

"Yes—so they say. She did something imprudent——"

"Ah, ha!" cried some Vilquin.

"She came in from a ride bathed in perspiration and drank iced water, at least so Dr. Troussenard says."

By the time Madame Dumay returned, the troubles of the Mignons were an exhausted subject; no one thought anything more of Caroline's absence or the reappearance of the cashier's wife.

At the beginning of 1827 the newspapers were full of the trial of Georges d'Estourny, who was proved guilty of constant cheating at play. This young pirate vanished abroad without thinking any more about Mademoiselle Mignon, whose money value was destroyed by the bankruptcy at le Havre. Before long Caroline knew that she was deserted, and her father a ruined man. She came home in a fearful state of mortal illness, and died a few days afterwards at the Chalet. Her death, at any rate, saved her reputation. The malady spoken of by Monsieur Mignon at the time of his daughter's elopement was very generally believed in, and the medical orders which had sent her off, it was said, to Nice.

To the very last the mother hoped to save her child. Bettina was her darling, as Modeste was her father's. There was something touching in this preference: Bettina was the image of Charles, as Modeste was of her mother. They perpetuated their love in their children. Caroline, a Provençal, inherited from her father the beautiful blue-black hair, like a raven's wing, which we admire in the daughters of the south, the hazel, almond-shaped eyes as bright as a star, the olive complexion with the golden glow of a velvety fruit, the arched foot, the Spanish bust that swells beneath the bodice. And the father and mother were alike proud of the charming contrast of the two sisters.

"A demon and an angel!" people used to say, without ill meaning, though it was prophetic.

After spending a month in tears in her room, where she insisted on staying and seeing no one, the poor German lady came forth with her eyes seriously injured. Before she lost her sight she went, in spite of all her friends, to look at Caroline's tomb. This last image remained bright in her darkness, as the red specter of the last object we have seen remains when we shut our eyes in bright daylight. After this terrible and twofold disaster, Dumay, though he could not be more devoted, was more anxious than ever about Modeste, now an only child, though her father knew it not. Madame Dumay, who was crazy about Modeste, like all women who have no children, overpowered her with her deputy motherhood, but without disobeying her husband's orders. Dumay was distrustful of female friendships. His injunctions were absolute.

"If ever any man, of whatever age or rank, speaks to Modeste," said Dumay, "if he looks at her, casts sheep's eyes at her, he is a dead man. I will blow his brains out and surrender myself to the Public Prosecutor. My death may save her. If you do not wish to see me cut my throat, fill my place unflinchingly when I am in town."

For three years Dumay had examined his pistols every night. He seemed to have included in his oath the two Pyrenean dogs, remarkably intelligent beasts; one slept in

the house, the other was sentinel in a kennel that he never came out of, and he never barked; but the minute when those dogs should set their teeth in an intruder would be a terrible one for him.

The life may now be imagined which the mother and daughter led at the Chalet. Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, frequently accompanied by Gobenheim, came almost every evening to visit their friends and play a rubber. Conversation would turn on business at le Havre, on the trivial events of country town life. They left between nine and ten. Modeste went to put her mother to bed; they said their prayers together, they talked over their hopes, they spoke of the dearly loved traveler. After kissing her mother, Modeste went to her own room at about ten o'clock. Next morning Modeste dressed her mother with the same care, the same prayers, the same little chat. To Modeste's honor, from the day when her mother's terrible infirmity deprived her of one of her senses, she made herself her waiting-maid, and always with the same solicitude at every hour, without wearying of it, or finding it monotonous. Her affection was supreme, and always ready, with a sweetness rare in young girls, and that was highly appreciated by those who saw her tenderness. And so, Modeste was, in the eyes of the Latournelles and of Monsieur and Madame Dumay, the jewel I have described. Between breakfast and dinner, on sunny days, Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay took a little walk as far as the shore, Modeste assisting, for the blind woman needed the support of two arms.

A month before the scene in which this digression falls as a parenthesis, Madame Mignon had held council with her only friends, Madame Latournelle, the notary, and Dumay, while Madame Dumay was giving Modeste the little diversion of a long walk.

"Listen, my friends," said the blind woman, "my daughter is in love. I feel it; I see it. A strange change has come over her, and I cannot think how you have failed to observe it . . ."

"Bless my stars!" the Lieutenant exclaimed.

“Do not interrupt me, Dumay. For the last two months Modeste has dressed herself with care as if she were going to meet someone. She has become excessively particular about her shoes; she wants her foot to look nice, and scolds Madame Gobain the shoemaker. Some days the poor child sits gloomy and watchful, as if she expected somebody; her voice is short and sharp, as though by questioning her I broke in on her expectancy, her secret hopes; and then, if that somebody has been——”

“Bless my stars!”

“Sit down, Dumay,” said the lady. “Well, then Modeste is gay. Oh! you do not see that she is gay; you cannot discern these shades, too subtle for eyes to see that have all nature to look at. Her cheerfulness betrays itself in the tones of her voice, accents which I can detect and account for. Modeste, instead of sitting still and dreaming, expends her light activity in flighty movements. In short, she is happy! There is a tone of thanksgiving even in the ideas she utters. Oh, my friends, I have learnt to know happiness as well as grief. By the kiss my poor Modeste gives me I can guess what is going on in her mind: whether she has had what she was expecting, or is uneasy. There are many shades in kisses, even in those of a young girl—for Modeste is innocence itself, but it is not ignorant innocence. Though I am blind, my affection is clairvoyante, and I implore you—watch my daughter.”

On this, Dumay, quite ferocious, the notary as a man who is bent on solving a riddle, Madame Latournelle as a duenna who has been cheated, and Madame Dumay, who shared her husband's fears,—all constituted themselves spies over Modeste. Modeste was never alone for a moment. Dumay spent whole nights under the windows, wrapped in a cloak like a jealous Spaniard; still, armed as he was with military sagacity, he could find no accusing clew. Unless she were in love with the nightingales in Vilquin's park, or some goblin prince, Modeste could have seen no one, could neither have received nor given a signal. Madame Dumay, who never went to bed till she had seen Modeste asleep, hovered about the roads on the high ground near the Chalet with a

vigilance equal to her husband's. Under the eyes of these four Arguses, the blameless child, whose smallest actions were reported and analyzed, was so absolutely acquitted of any criminal proceedings, that the friends suspected Madame Mignon of a craze, a monomania. It devolved on Madame Latournelle, who herself took Modeste to church and home again, to tell the mother that she was under a mistake.

"Modeste," said she, "is a very enthusiastic young person; she has passions for this one's poetry and that one's prose. You could not see what an impression was made on her by that executioner's piece (a phrase of Butscha's, who lent wit without any return to his benefactress), called *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*; but she seemed to me beside herself with her admiration of that Monsieur Hugo. I cannot think where that sort of people (Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and Byron were what Madame Latournelle meant by *that sort*) go to find their ideas. The little thing talked to me about *Childe Harold*; I did not choose to have the worst of it; I was fool enough to set to work to read it that I might be able to argue with her. I don't know whether it is to be set down to the translations, but my heart heaved, my eyes were dizzy. I could not get on with it. It is full of howling comparisons, of rocks that faint away, of the lavas of war!

"Of course, as it is an Englishman on his travels, one must expect something queer, but this is really too much! You fancy you are in Spain, and he carries you up into the clouds above the Alps; he makes the torrents and the stars speak; and then there are too many virgins! You get sick of them. In short, after Napoleon's campaigns we have had enough of flaming shot and sounding brass which roll on from page to page. Modeste tells me that all this pathos comes from the translator, and I ought to read the English. But I am not going to learn English for Lord Byron when I would not learn it for Exupère! I much prefer the romances of Ducray-Duménil to these English romances! I am too thoroughly Norman to fall in love with everything that comes from abroad, and especially from England——"

Madame Mignon, notwithstanding her perpetual mourn-

ing, could not help smiling at the idea of Madame Latournelle reading *Childe Harold*. The stern lady accepted this smile as approbation of her doctrines.

"And so, my dear Madame Mignon, you mistake Modeste's imaginings, the result of her reading, for love affairs. She is twenty. At that age a girl loves herself. She dresses to see herself dressed. Why, I used to make my little sister, who is dead now, put on a man's hat, and we played at gentleman and lady. . . . You, at Frankfort, had a happy girlhood, but let us be just: Modeste here has no amusements. In spite of our readiness to meet her lightest wishes, she knows that she is guarded, and the life she leads has little pleasure to offer a girl who could not, as she can, find something to divert her in books. Take my word for it, she loves no one but you. Think yourself lucky that she falls in love with nobody but Lord Byron's corsairs, Walter Scott's romantic heroes, or your Germans, Count Egmont, Werther, Schiller, and all the other *ers*."

"Well, Madame?" said Dumay respectfully, alarmed by Madame Mignon's silence.

"Modeste is not merely ready for love; she loves somebody," said the mother obstinately.

"Madame, my life is at stake, and you will no doubt allow me—not for my own sake, but for my poor wife's and for the Colonel's, and all our sakes—to try to find out which is mistaken—the watch-dog or the mother."

"It is you, Dumay! Oh, if I could but look my daughter in the face!" said the poor blind woman.

"But who is there that she can love?" replied Madame Latournelle. "As for us—I can answer for my Exupère."

"It cannot be Gobenheim, whom we hardly see for nine hours out of the week since the Colonel went away. Besides, he is not thinking of Modeste—that crown-piece made man! His uncle, Gobenheim-Keller, told him, 'Get rich enough to marry a Keller!' With that for a programme, there is no fear that he will even know of what sex Modeste is. Those are all the men we see here. I do not count Butscha, poor little hunchback. I love him; he is your Dumay, Madame," he said to the notary's wife. "Butscha knows very well that

if he glanced at Modeste it would cost him a combing *à la mode de Vannes*.—Not a soul ever comes near us. Madame Latournelle, who since—since your misfortune, comes to take Modeste to church and bring her home again, has watched her carefully these last days during the Mass, and has seen nothing suspicious about her. And then, if I must tell you everything, I myself have raked the paths round the house for the last month, and I have always found them in the morning with no footmarks.”

“Rakes are not costly nor difficult to use,” said the German lady.

“And the dogs?” asked Dumay.

“Lovers can find sops for them,” replied Madame Mignon.

“I could blow out my own brains if you are right, for I should be done for,” cried Dumay.

“And why, Dumay?”

“Madame, I could not meet the Colonel’s eye if he were not to find his daughter, especially now that she is his only child; and as pure, as virtuous as she was when he said to me on board the ship, ‘Do not let the fear of the scaffold stop you, Dumay, when Modeste’s honor is at stake.’”

“I know you both—how like you!” said Madame Mignon, much moved.

“I will wager my eternal salvation that Modeste is as innocent as she was in her cradle,” said Madame Dumay.

“Oh, I will know all about it,” replied Dumay, “if Madame la Comtesse will allow me to try a plan, for old soldiers are knowing in stratagems.”

“I allow you to do anything that may clear up the matter without injuring our last surviving child.”

“And what will you do, Anne,” said his wife, “to find out a young girl’s secret when it is so closely kept?”

“All of you obey me exactly,” said the Lieutenant, “for you must all help.”

This brief account, which, if elaborately worked up, would have furnished forth a complete picture of domestic life—how many families will recognize in it the events of their own home!—is enough to give a clew to the importance of the

little details previously given of the persons and circumstances of this evening, when the lieutenant had undertaken to cope with a young girl, and to drag from the recesses of her heart a passion detected by her blind mother.

An hour went by in ominous calm, broken only by the hieroglyphical phrases of the whist-players: "Spade!—Trump!—Cut!—Have we the honors?—Two trebles!—Eight all!—Who deals?"—phrases representing in these days the great emotions of the aristocracy of Europe. Modeste stitched, without any surprise at her mother's taciturnity. Madame Mignon's pocket-handkerchief slipped off her lap on to the floor; Butscha flew to pick it up. He was close to Modeste, and as he rose said in her ear, "Be on your guard!"

Modeste raised astonished eyes, and their light, pointed darts as it seemed, filled the hunchback with ineffable joy.

"She loves no one," said the poor fellow to himself, and he rubbed his hands hard enough to flay them.

At this moment Exupère flew through the garden and into the house, rushing into the drawing-room like a whirlwind, and said in Dumay's ear, "Here is the young man!"

Dumay rose, seized his pistols, and went out.

"Good God! Supposing he kills him!" cried Madame Dumay, who burst into tears.

"But what is going on?" asked Modeste, looking at her friends with an air of perfect candor, and without any alarm.

"Something about a young man who prowls round the Chalet!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What then?" said Modeste. "Why should Dumay kill him?"

"*Sancta simplicitas!*" said Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander gazes at Babylon in Lebrun's picture.

"Where are you going, Modeste?" asked her mother, as her daughter was leaving the room.

"To get everything ready for you to go to bed, mamma," replied Modeste, in a voice as clear as the notes of a harmonica.

"You have had all your trouble for nothing," said Butscha to Dumay when he came in.

"Modeste is as saintly as the Virgin on our altar!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"Ah, good Heavens! Such agitation is too much for me," said the cashier. "And yet I am a strong man."

"I would give twenty-five sous to understand one word of what you are at this evening," said Gobenheim; "you all seem to me to have gone mad."

"And yet a treasure is at stake," said Butscha, standing on tiptoe to speak into Gobenheim's ear.

"Unfortunately, I am almost positive of the truth of what I say," repeated the mother.

"Then it now lies with you, Madame," said Dumay quietly, "to prove that we are wrong."

When he found that nothing was involved but Modeste's reputation, Gobenheim took his hat, bowed, and went away, carrying off ten sous, and regarding a fresh rubber as hopeless.

"Exupère, and you Butscha, leave us," said Madame Latournelle. "Go down to the town. You will be in time to see one piece; I will treat you to the play."

As soon as Madame Mignon was left with her four friends, Madame Latournelle glanced at Dumay, who, being a Breton, understood the mother's persistency, and then at her husband fidgeting with the cards, and thought herself justified in speaking.

"Come, Madame Mignon, tell us what decisive evidence has struck your ear?"

"Oh, my dear friend, if you were a musician, you, like me, would have heard Modeste's tone when she sings of love."

The piano belonging to the two sisters was one of the few feminine luxuries among the furniture brought from the town-house to the Chalet. Modeste had mitigated some tedium by studying without a master. She was a born musician, and played to cheer her mother. She sang with natural grace the German airs her mother taught her. From this instruction and this endeavor had resulted the phenomenon, not uncommon in natures prompted by a vocation, that

Modeste unconsciously composed purely melodic strains, as such composition is possible without a knowledge of harmony. Melody is to music what imagery and feeling are to poetry, a flower that may blossom spontaneously. All nations have had popular melodies before the introduction of harmony. Botany came after flowers. Thus Modeste, without having learnt anything of the technique of painting beyond what she had gathered from seeing her sister work in water-colors, could stand enchanted before a picture of Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Murillo, Rembrandt, Albert Dürer, or Holbein, that is to say, the highest ideal of each nation. Now, for about a month, Modeste had more especially burst into nightingale songs, into new strains so poetical as to arouse her mother's attention, surprised as she was to find Modeste bent on composition and trying airs to unfamiliar words.

"If your suspicions have no other foundation," said Latournelle to Madame Mignon, "I pity your sensitiveness."

"When a young girl sings in Brittany," said Dumay, now grave again, "the lover is very near."

"I will let you overhear Modeste improvising," said the mother, "and you will see!——"

"Poor child!" said Madame Dumay. "If she could but know of our anxiety, she would be in despair; and she would tell us the truth, especially if she knew all it meant to Dumay."

"To-morrow, my friends, I will question Modeste," said Madame Mignon; "and perhaps I shall achieve more by affection than you have gained by ruse."

Was the comedy of the "Ill-guarded Daughter" being enacted here, as it is everywhere and at all times, while these worthy Bartolos, these spies, these vigilant watch-dogs failed to scent, to guess, to detect the lover, the conspiracy, the smoke of the fire?

This was not the consequence of any defiance between a prisoner and her jailers, between the tyranny of the dungeon and the liberty of the captive, but merely the eternal repetition of the first drama played as the curtain rose on the new Creation: Eve in Paradise. Which, in this case, was right—the mother or the watch-dog?

None of the persons about Modeste understood the girl's heart—for, be assured, the soul and the face were in unison. Modeste had transplanted her life into a world of which the existence is as completely denied in our days as the New World of Christopher Columbus was denied in the sixteenth century. Fortunately, she could be silent, or she would have been thought mad.

We must first explain the influence that past events had had on the girl. Two especially had formed her character, as they awakened her intelligence. Monsieur and Madame Mignon, startled by the disaster that had come upon Bettina, had, before their bankruptcy, resolved on seeing Modeste married, and their choice fell on the son of a wealthy banker, a native of Hamburg, who had settled at le Havre in 1815, and who was under some obligations to them. This young man—Francisque Althor—the dandy of le Havre, handsome in the style which captivates the philistine, what the English call a heavy-weight—florid healthy coloring, firm flesh, and square shoulders—threw over his bride elect, at the news of their disaster, so completely that he had never since set eyes on Modeste, or on Madame Mignon, or on the Dumays. Latournelle having made so bold as to speak to the father, Jacob Althor, on the subject, the old German had shrugged his shoulders, and replied, “I do not know what you mean.”

This reply, repeated to Modeste to give her experience, was a lesson she understood all the better because Latournelle and Dumay made voluminous comments on this base desertion. Charles Mignon's two daughters, spoiled children as they were, rode, had their own horses and servants, and enjoyed fatal liberty. Modeste, finding herself in command of a recognized lover, had allowed Francisque to kiss her hand, and put his arm round her to help her to mount; she had accepted flowers, and the trifling gifts of affection which are the burden of paying court to a young lady; she worked him a purse, believing in bonds of that kind, so strong to noble souls, but mere cobwebs to the Gobenheims, Vilquins, and Althors.

In the course of the spring, after Madame Mignon and her daughter had moved into the Chalet, Francisque Althor

went to dine with the Vilquins. On catching sight of Modeste beyond the wall of the lawn, he looked away. Six weeks after, he married Mademoiselle Vilquin—the eldest. Thus Modeste learnt that she, handsome, young, and well born, had for three months been simply Mademoiselle Million. So Modeste's poverty, which was of course known, was a sentinel which guarded the ways to the Chalet quite as well as the Dumays' prudence and the Latournelles' vigilance. Mademoiselle Mignon was never mentioned but with insulting pity: "Poor girl! what will become of her? She will die an old maid."—"What a hard lot! After seeing all the world at her feet, and having a chance of marrying Althor, to find that no one will have anything to say to her!"—"Such a life of luxury, my dear! and to have sunk to penury!"

Nor were these insults spoken in private and only guessed by Modeste; more than once she heard them uttered by the young men and girls of the town when walking at Ingouville, who, knowing that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon lived at the Chalet, discussed them audibly as they went past the pretty little house. Some of the Vilquins' friends wondered that these ladies could bear to live so near the home of their former splendor. Modeste, sitting behind closed shutters, often heard such impertinence as this: "I cannot think how they can live there!" one would say to another, walking round the garden, perhaps to help the Vilquins to be rid of their tenants. "What do they live on?—What can they do there?—The old woman is gone blind!—Is Mademoiselle Mignon still pretty?—Ah, she has no horses now. How dashing she used to be!"

As she heard this savage nonsense spoken by envy, foul-mouthed and surly, and tilting at the past, many girls would have felt the blood rise to their very brow; others would have wept, some would have felt a surge of rage; but Modeste smiled as we smile at a theater, hearing actors speak. Her pride could not descend to the level which such words, rising from below, could reach.

The other event was even more serious than this mercenary desertion. Bettina-Caroline had died in her sister's

arms; Modeste had nursed her with the devotion of a woman, with the inquisitiveness of a maiden imagination. The two girls, in the watches of the night, had exchanged many a confidence. What dramatic interest hung round Bettina in the eyes of her innocent sister! Bettina knew passion only as misfortune; she was dying because she had loved. Between two girls every man, wretch though he be, is a lover. Passion is the one thing really absolute in human life; it will always have its own. Georges d'Estourny, a gambler, dissipated and guilty, always dwelt in the memory of these young things as the Parisian dandy of the Havre parties, the cynosure of every woman—Bettina believed that she had snatched him from Madame Vilquin's flirtations—and, to crown all, Bettina's successful lover. In a young girl her worship is stronger than social reprobation. In Bettina's mind, justice had erred; how should she have condemned a young man by whom she had been loved for six months, loved with passion in the mysterious retreat where Georges hid her in Paris, that he might preserve his liberty? Thus, Bettina, in her death, had inoculated her sister with love.

The sisters had often discussed the great drama of passion, to which imagination lends added importance; and the dead girl had taken Modeste's purity with her to her grave, leaving her not perhaps all-knowing, but, at any rate, all-curious. At the same time, remorse had often set sharp pangs in Bettina's heart, and she lavished warnings on her sister. In the midst of her revelations, she never failed to preach obedience in Modeste, absolute obedience to her family. On the eve of her death, she implored her sister to remember the pillow she had soaked with her tears, and never to imitate the conduct her sufferings could scarcely expiate. Bettina accused herself of having brought the lightning down on those dear to her; she died in despair at not receiving her father's forgiveness. In spite of the consolations of religion, which was softened by such deep repentance, Bettina's last words, in a heartrending cry, were, "Father! Father!"

"Never give your heart but with your hand," said she to Modeste, an hour before her death; "and, above all, accept no attentions without my mother's consent or papa's."

These words, touching in their simple truth, and spoken in the hour of death, found an echo in Modeste's mind, all the more because Bettina made her take a solemn vow. The poor girl, with prophetic insight, drew from under her pillow a ring on which she had had engraved *Pense à Bettina*, 1827—"Remember Bettina"—instead of a motto, sending it by the hand of her faithful servant Françoise Cochet, to be done in the town. A few minutes before she breathed her last sigh, she placed this ring on her sister's finger, begging her to wear it till she should be married. Thus, between these two girls there had been a strange succession of acute remorse and artless descriptions of that brief summer which had been so soon followed by the autumn winds of desertion, while tears, regrets, and memories were constantly overruled by a dread of evil.

And yet this drama of the young creature seduced, and returning to die of a dreadful disorder under the roof of elegant poverty, the meanness of the Vilquins' son-in-law, and her mother's blindness, resulting from her griefs, only account for the surface of Modeste's character, with which the Dumays and the Latournelles had to be content, for no devotion can fill the mother's place. This monotonous life in the pretty Chalet, among the beautiful flowers grown by Dumay; these habits, as regular as the working of a clock; this provincial propriety; these rubbers at cards by which she sat knitting; this silence, only broken by the moaning of the sea at the equinoxes; this monastic peace covered the stormiest kind of life—the life of ideas, the life of the spiritual world.

We sometimes wonder at the lapses of young girls, but that is when they have no blind mother to sound with her stick the depths of the maiden heart undermined by the caverns of fancy.

The Dumays were asleep when Modeste opened her window, imagining that a man might pass by—the man of her dreams, the knight who would take her on a pillion, defying Dumay's pistols. In her dejection after her sister's death, Modeste had plunged into such constant reading as was enough to make her idiotic. Having been brought up to

speaking two languages, she was mistress of German as well as of French; then she and Caroline had learnt English of Madame Dumay. Modeste, who in such matters found little supervision from her uncultivated companions, fed her soul on the masterpieces of modern English, German, and French literature—Lord Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, Hugo, Lamartine, Crabbe, Moore, the great works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, history and the theater, romance from Rabelais to Manon Lescaut, from Montaigne's *Essays* to Diderot, from the *Fabliaux* to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the thoughts of three countries furnished her brain with a medley of images. And her mind was beautiful in its cold guilelessness, its repressed virginal instincts, from which sprang forth, flashing, armed, sincere, and powerful, an intense admiration for genius. To Modeste, a new book was a great event; she was so happy over a great work as to alarm Madame Latournelle, as we have seen, and saddened when it failed to take her heart by storm.

But no gleam of this lurid flame ever appeared on the surface; it escaped the eye of Lieutenant Dumay and his wife as well as of the Latournelles; but the ear of the blind mother could not fail to hear its crackling. The deep contempt which Modeste thenceforth conceived for all ordinary men soon gave her countenance an indescribably proud and shy expression which qualified its German simplicity, but which agrees with one detail of her face; her hair, growing in a point in the middle of her forehead, seems to continue the slight furrow made by thought between her brows, and makes this shy look perhaps a little too wild.

This sweet girl's voice—before his departure Charles Mignon used to call her his little "Solomon's slipper," she was so clever—had acquired delightful flexibility of accent from her study of three languages. This advantage is yet further enhanced by a suave fresh quality which goes to the heart as well as to the ear. Though her mother could not see the hope of high destiny stamped on her daughter's brow, she could study the changes of her soul's development in the tones of that amorous voice.

After this period of ravenous reading, there came to

Modeste a phase of the singular faculty possessed by a lively imagination; of living as an actor in an existence pictured as in a dream; of representing things wished for with a vividness so keen, that it verges on reality; of enjoying them in fancy, of devouring time even, seeing herself married, grown old, attending her own funeral, like Charles V.—in short, of playing out the drama of life, and at need that of death too.

As for Modeste, she played the drama of love. She imagined herself adored to the height of her wishes, and passing through every social phase. As the heroine of some dark romance, she loved either the executioner or some villain who died on the scaffold, or else, like her sister, some penniless fop, whose misdemeanors were the affair of the police court. She pictured herself as a courtesan, and laughed men to scorn in the midst of perpetual festivities, like Ninon. By turns, she led the life of an adventuress or of a popular actress, going through the vicissitudes of a Gil Blas, or the triumphs of Pasta, Malibran, Florine. Satiated with horrors, she would come back to real life. She married a notary, she ate the dry bread of respectability, she saw herself in Madame Latournelle. She accepted a laborious life, facing the worries of accumulating a fortune; then she began to romance again: she was loved for her beauty; the son of a peer of France, artistic and eccentric, read her heart, and discerned the star which the genius of a Staël had set on her brow. At last her father returned a millionaire. Justified by experience, she subjected her lovers to tests, preserving her own freedom; she owned a splendid château, servants, carriages, everything that luxury has most curious to bestow; and she mystified her lovers till she was forty, when she accepted an offer.

This edition of the *Arabian Nights*, of which there was but one copy, lasted nearly a year, and brought Modeste to satiety of invention. She too often held life in the hollow of her hand; she could say to herself very philosophically, and too seriously, too bitterly, too often, "Well; and then?" not to sink now to her waist in those depths of disgust, into which men of genius fall who are too eager to escape by the vast

labor of the task to which they have devoted themselves. But for her rich nature and her youth, Modeste would have retired to a cloister. This satiety flung the girl, still soaked in Catholic feeling, into a love of goodness, and of the infinite of heaven. She conceived of charity as the occupation of her life; still she groped in forlorn gloom as she found there no aliment for the fancy that gnawed at her heart like a malignant insect in the cup of a flower. She calmly stitched at baby clothes for poor women; and she listened absently to Monsieur Latournelle grumbling at Monsieur Dumay for trumping a thirteenth, or forcing him to play his last trump. Faith led Modeste into a strange path. She fancied that by becoming irreproachable in the Catholic sense, she might achieve such a pitch of sanctity that God would hear her and grant her desires.

“Faith, as Jesus Christ says, can remove mountains; the Saviour made His apostle walk on the Lake of Tiberias; while I only ask of God to send me a husband,” thought she. “That is much easier than going for a walk on the sea.”

She fasted all through Lent, and did not commit the smallest sin; then she promised herself that on coming out of church on a certain day she would meet a handsome young man, worthy of her, whom her mother would approve, and who would follow her, madly in love. On the day she had fixed for God to send her this angel without fail, she was persistently followed by a horrible beggar; it poured with rain, and there was not one young man out of doors. She went down to the quay to see the English come on shore, but every Englishman had an English damsel almost as handsome as herself, and Modeste could not see anything like a Childe Harold who had lost his way. At that stage tears rose to her eyes as she sat, like Marius, on the ruins of her imaginings. One day when she made an appointment with God for the third time, she believed that the elect of her dreams had come into the church, and she dragged Madame Latournelle to look behind every pillar, imagining that he was hiding out of delicacy. Thenceforth she concluded that God had no power. She often made conversations with this imaginary lover, inventing question and answer, and giving him a very pretty wit.

Thus it was her heart's excessive ambition, buried in romance, which gave Modeste the discretion so much admired by the good people who watched over her; they might have brought her many a Francisque Althor or Vilquin *fil*s, she would not have stooped to such boors. She required simply and purely a man of genius; talent she thought little of, as a barrister is nothing to a girl who is set on an ambassador. She wished for riches only to cast them at her idol's feet. The golden background against which the figures of her dreams stood out was less precious than her heart overflowing with a woman's delicacy; for her ruling idea was to give wealth and happiness to a Tasso, a Milton, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Murat, a Christopher Columbus. Vulgar sorrows appealed but little to this soul, which longed to extinguish the stake of such martyrs unrecognized during their lifetime. Modeste thirsted for unconfessed suffering, the great anguish of the mind.

Sometimes she imagined the balm, she elaborated the tenderness, the music, the thousand devices by which she would have soothed the fierce misanthropy of Jean-Jacques. Again she fancied herself the wife of Lord Byron, and almost entered into his scorn of realities, while making herself as fantastic as the poetry of Manfred, and into his doubts while making him a Catholic. Modeste accused all the women of the seventeenth century as guilty of Molière's melancholy.

"How is it," she wondered, "that some living, wealthy, and beautiful woman does not rush forth to meet every man of genius, to make herself his slave like Lara, the mysterious page?"

As you see, she had quite understood the English poet's wail, as sung by Gulnare. She greatly admired the conduct of the young English girl who came to propose to the younger Crébillon, who married her. The story of Sterne and Eliza Draper was a joy to her for some months; as the imaginary heroine of a similar romance, she studied the sublime part of Eliza again and again. The exquisite feeling so gracefully expressed in those letters filled her eyes with the tears which, it is said, never rose to those of the wittiest of English writers.

Modeste thus lived for some time by her sympathy, not

merely with the works, but with the personal character of her favorite authors. Goldsmith, the author of *Obermann*, Charles Nodier, Maturin—the poorest, the most unhappy were her gods; she understood their sufferings, she entered into their squalor, blending with heaven-sent visions; she poured on them the treasures of her heart; she pictured herself clearly as supplying the comforts of life to these artists, martyrs to their gifts. This noble compassion, this intuitive knowledge of the difficulties of work, this worship for talent, is one of the rarest vagaries that ever beat its wings in a woman's soul. At first it is like a secret between her and God, for there is nothing dazzling in it, nothing to flatter her vanity—that potent auxiliary of all actions in France.

From this third phase of her ideas there was born in Modeste a violent desire to study one of these anomalous lives to the very heart of it, to know the springs of thought, the secret sorrows of genius, and what it craves, and what it is. And so, in her, the rashness of fantasy, the wanderings of her soul in a void, her excursions into the darkness of the future, the impatience of her undeveloped love to center in an object, the nobleness of her notions of life, her determination to suffer in some lofty sphere rather than to paddle in the slough of provincial life as her mother had done, the vow she had made to herself never to go wrong, to respect her parents' home, and never bring to it anything but joy,—all this world of feeling at last took shape: Modeste purposed to be the wife of a poet, an artist, a man, in short, superior to the crowd; but she meant to choose him, and to subject him to a thorough study, before giving him her heart, her life, her immense tenderness freed from the trammels of passion.

She began by reveling in this pretty romance. Perfect tranquillity possessed her soul. Her countenance was gradually colored by it. She became the lovely and sublime image of Germany that you have seen, the glory of the Chalet, the pride of Madame Latournelle and the Dumays. Then Modeste lived a double life. She humbly and lovingly fulfilled all the trivial tasks of daily life at the Chalet, using them as a check to hold in the poem of her ideal existence,

like the Carthusians, who order their material life by rule, and occupy their time to allow the soul to develop itself in prayer.

All great intellects subject themselves to some mechanical employment to obtain control of thought. Spinoza ground lenses, Bayle counted the tiles in a roof, Montesquieu worked in his garden. The body being thus under control, the spirit spreads its wings in perfect security. So Madame Mignon, who read her daughter's soul, was right. Modeste was in love; she loved with that Platonic sentiment which is so rare, so little understood—the first illusion of girlhood, the subtlest of feelings, the heart's daintiest morsel. She drank deep draughts from the cup of the unknown, the impossible, the visionary. She delighted in the Blue Bird of the Maiden's Paradise, which sings far away, on which none may lay hands, which lets itself be seen, while the shot of no gun can ever touch it; its magical colors, like the sparkling of gems, dazzle the eye, but it is never more seen when once reality appears—the hideous Harpy bringing witnesses and the *Maire* in her train. To have all the poetry of love without the presence of the lover! How exquisite an orgy! What a fair chimera of all colors and every plumage!

This was the trifling foolish accident which sealed the girl's fate.

Modeste saw on a bookseller's counter a lithographed portrait of de Canalis, one of her favorites. You know what libels these sketches are, the outcome of an odious kind of speculation which falls upon the persons of celebrated men, as if their face were public property. So Canalis, caught in a Byronic attitude, offered to public admiration his disordered hair, his bare throat, and the excessively high forehead proper to every bard. Victor Hugo's brow will lead to as many heads being shaved as there were sucking field-m Marshals who rushed to die on the strength of Napoleon's glory.

Modeste was struck by this head, made sublime by commercial requirements; and on the day when she bought the portrait, one of the finest books by Arthès had just come out. Though it may sound to her discredit, it must be confessed that she long hesitated between the illustrious poet and the

illustrious prose writer. But were these two great men unmarried? Modeste began by securing the co-operation of Françoise Cochet, the girl whom poor Bettina-Caroline had taken with her from le Havre and brought back again. She lived in the town, and Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay would employ her for a day's work in preference to any other. Modeste had this somewhat homely creature up into her room; she swore that she would never cause her parents the smallest grief, nor exceed the limits imposed on a young lady; she promised Françoise that in the future on her father's return, the poor girl should have an easy life, on condition of her keeping absolute secrecy as to the service required of her.—What was it?—A mere trifle, a perfectly innocent thing. All that Modeste asked of her accomplice was that she should post certain letters and fetch the replies, addressed to Françoise Cochet.

The bargain concluded, Modeste wrote a polite note to Dauriat, the publisher of Canalis' poems, in which she asked him, in the interests of the great poet, whether Canalis were married, begging him to address the answer to Mademoiselle Françoise, *poste restante*, au Havre. Dauriat, who, of course, could not take such a letter seriously, sent a reply concocted in his private room by five or six journalists, each in turn adding his jest.

“MADemoisELLE,—Canalis (Baron de), Constant-Cyr-Melchior, member of the French Academy, born in 1800 at Canalis, Corrèze; stands five feet four, is in good condition, vaccinated, thoroughbred, has served his term under the conscription, enjoys perfect health, has a small landed estate in Corrèze and wishes to marry, but looks for great wealth.

“His arms are, party per pale gules a broadax or, and sable a shell argent; surmounted by a baron's coronet; supporters, two larches proper. The motto *Or et fer* (gold and iron) has never proved auriferous.

“The first Canalis, who went to the Holy Land in the first crusade, is mentioned in the Chronicles of Auvergne as carrying no weapon but an ax, by reason of the complete indigence in which he lived, and which has ever since weighed on his

posterity. Hence, no doubt, the blazon. The ax brought him nothing but an empty shell. This noble baron became famous, having discomfited many infidels, and he died at Jerusalem, without either gold or iron, as bare as a worm, on the road to Ascalon, the ambulance service having not yet been called into existence.

“The castle of Canalis—the land yields a few chestnuts—consists of two dismantled towers joined by a wall, remarkable for its superior growth of ivy, and it pays twenty-two francs to the revenue.

“The publisher, undersigned, begs to remark that he pays Monsieur de Canalis ten thousand francs per volume for his poetry. He does not give his empty shells for nothing.

“The Bard of the Corrèze lives at Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29, which is a suitable situation for a poet of the Seraphic School. Worms (*les vers*) are a bait for gudgeon. Letters must be prepaid.

“Certain noble dames of the Faubourg Saint-Germain often, it is said, make their way to Paradise and patronize the divinity. King Charles X. thinks so highly of this great poet as to believe him capable of becoming a statesman. He has recently made him an officer of the Legion of Honor, and, which is more to the purpose, Master of Appeals, attached to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These functions in no way keep the great man from drawing a pension of three thousand francs from the fund devoted to the encouragement of art and letters. This pecuniary success causes, in the publishing world, an eighth plague which Egypt was spared—a plague of worms (*les vers*)!

“The last edition of the works of Canalis, printed on hand-made paper, large 8vo, with vignettes by Bixiou, Joseph Bridau, Schinner, Sommervieux, and others, printed by Didot, is in five volumes, price nine francs, post paid.”

This letter fell like a paving-stone on a tulip. A poet as Master of Appeals, in the immediate circle of a Minister, drawing a pension, aiming at the red rosette, adored of the ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain! Was this at all like the threadbare poet wandering on the quays, melancholy and

dreamy, overwrought by work, and climbing up to his garret again loaded with poetic inspiration? At the same time, Modeste saw through the jest of the envious publisher, which conveyed, "I made Canalis! I made Nathan!" Then she re-read Canalis' verses, very catching verses, full of hypocrisy, and which require a few words of analysis if only to explain her infatuation.

Canalis is distinguished from Lamartine, the chief of the Seraphic School, by a sort of sick-nurse blarney, a perfidious sweetness, and exquisite correctness. If the chief, with his sublime outcry, may be called an eagle, Canalis, all rose and white, is a flamingo. In him women discern the friend they yearn for, a discreet confidant, their interpreter, the being who understands them, and who explains them to themselves.

The broad margins with which Dauriat had graced his last edition were covered with confessions scribbled in pencil by Modeste, who sympathized with this dreamy and tender soul. Canalis has not life in his gift; he does not breathe it into his creations; but he knows how to soothe vague sufferings such as Modeste was a victim to. He speaks to girls in their own language, lulling the pain of the most recent wounds, and silencing groans, and even sobs. His talent does not consist in preaching loftily to the sufferer, in giving her the medicine of strong emotions; he is content to say in a musical voice which commands belief: "I am unhappy, as you are; I understand you fully; come with me, we will weep together on the bank of this stream, under the willows!" And they go! and listen to his verse, as vacuous and as sonorous as the song of a nurse putting a baby to sleep! Canalis—like Nodier in this—bewitches you by an artlessness, which in the prose writer is natural but in the poet elaborately studied, by his archness, his smile, his fallen flowers, his childlike philosophy. He mimics the language of early days well enough to carry you back to the fair field of illusion.

To an eagle we are pitiless; we insist on the quality of the diamond, flawless perfection; but from Canalis we are satisfied with the orphan's mite; everything may be forgiven him. He seems such a good fellow, human above everything. These seraphic airs succeed with him, as those of a woman will always

succeed if she acts simplicity well—the startled, youthful, martyred, suffering angel.

Modeste, summing up her impressions, felt that she trusted that soul, that countenance, as attractive as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's. She paid no heed to the publisher. And so, at the beginning of the month of August, she wrote the following letter to this Dorat of the sacristy, who even now is regarded as one of the stars of the modern Pleiades.

I.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

“Many times ere now, Monsieur, I have intended to write to you—and why? You can guess: to tell you how much I delight in your talent. Yes, I feel a longing to express to you the admiration of a poor country-bred girl, very solitary in her nook, whose sole joy is in reading your poetry. From *René* I came to you. Melancholy tends to reverie. How many other women must have paid you the homage of their secret thoughts! What chance have I of being of the elect in such a crowd? What interest can this paper have, though full of my soul, above all the perfumed letters which beset you? I introduce myself with more to perplex you than any other woman. I intend to remain unknown, and yet ask your entire confidence, as if you had known me a long time.

“Answer me, be kind to me. I do not pledge myself to tell my name some day, still I do not positively say no. . . . What more can I add to this letter? Regard it, Monsieur, as a great effort, and allow me to offer you my hand—oh, a very friendly hand—that of your servant,

“O. D'ESTE-M.

“If you do me the favor of replying, address your letter, I beg, to Mademoiselle F. Cochet, Poste Restante, le Havre.”

Now every damsel, whether romantic or no, can imagine Modeste's impatience during the next few days! The air was full of tongues of flame; the trees looked like plumage; she did not feel her body; she floated above nature! The earth van-

ished under her tread. Wondering at the powers of the post-office, she followed her little sheet of paper through space; she was glad, as we are glad at twenty at the first exercise of our will. She was bewitched, possessed, as people were in the Middle Ages. She pictured to herself the poet's lodgings, his room; she saw him opening the letter, and she made a million guesses.

Having sketched his poetry, it is necessary here to give an outline of the man. Canalis is small and thin, with an aristocratic figure; dark, gifted with a foolish face and a rather insignificant head, that of a man who has more vanity than pride. He loves luxury, display, and splendor. Fortune is a necessity to him more than to other men. No less proud of his birth than of his talent, he has swamped his ancestors by too great personal pretensions. After all, the Canalis are neither Navarreins, nor Cadignans, nor Grandlieus, nor Nègrepelisses; however, nature has done much to support his pretensions. He has the eyes of Oriental luster that we look for in a poet, a very pretty refinement of manner, a thrilling voice; but a mannerism that is natural to him almost nullifies these advantages. He is an actor in perfect good faith. He displays a very elegant foot—it is an acquired habit. He has a declamatory style of talk, but it is his own. His affectation is theatrical, but it has become a second nature. These faults, as we must call them, are in harmony with an unfailing generosity which may be termed carpet-knightliness in contrast to chivalry. Canalis has not faith enough to be a Don Quixote, but he is too high-minded not to take invariably the nobler side in any question. His poetry, which comes out in a military eruption on every possible occasion, is a great disadvantage to the poet, who is not indeed lacking in wit, but whose talent hinders his wit from developing. He is the slave of his reputation; he aims at seeming superior to it.

Hence, as frequently happens, the man is completely out of tune with the products of his mind. The author of these insinuating, artless poems, full of tender sentiment, of these calm verses as clear as lake ice, of this caressing womanish poetry, is an ambitious little man, buttoned tightly into his coat, with the air of a diplomat, dreaming of political influ-

ence, stinking of the aristocrat, scented and conceited, thirsting for a fortune that he may have an income equal to his ambitions, and already spoiled by success under two aspects—the crown of bays and the crown of myrtle. A salary of eight thousand francs, a pension of three thousand, two thousand from the Académie, a thousand crowns of inherited income—a good deal reduced by the agricultural requirements of the Canalis estate, and the ten thousand francs he gets from his poems one year with another—twenty-five thousand francs a year in all.

To Modeste's hero this income was all the more precarious because he spent, on an average, five or six thousand francs a year more than he received, but hitherto the King's privy purse and the secret funds of the Ministry had made up the deficit. He had composed a hymn for the coronation, for which he had been rewarded with a service of plate; he refused a sum of money, saying that the Canalis owed their homage to the King of France. The *Roi Chevalier* smiled, and ordered from Odiot a costly version of the lines from *Zaïre*.

"What! Rhymester, did you ever hope to vie
With Charles the Tenth in generosity?"

Canalis had drained himself dry, to use a picturesque vulgarism; he knew that he was incapable of inventing a fresh form of poetry; his lyre has not seven strings, it has but one; and so long had he played on it, that the public left him now no choice but to use it to hang himself, or to be silent. De Marsay, who could not endure Canalis, had uttered a sarcasm of which the poisoned dart had pierced the poet's conceit to the quick.

"Canalis," he had said, "strikes me as being just like the man of whom Frederick the Great spoke after a battle, as the trumpeter who had never ceased blowing the same note through his penny pipe!"

Canalis was anxious to become a political personage, and as a beginning made capital of a journey he had taken to Madrid when the Duc de Chaulieu was ambassador, accompanying him as *attaché*—but to the Duchess, as the jest went in fashionable drawing-rooms. How often has a jest sealed a man's fate! Colla, the erewhile President of the Cisalpine Republic,

and the greatest advocate in Piémont, is told by a friend, at the age of forty, that he knows nothing of botany; he is nettled, he becomes a Jussieu, cultivates flowers, invents new ones, and publishes, in Latin, the *Flora of Piémont*, the work of ten years!

"Well, after all, Canning and Chateaubriand were statesmen," said the extinguished poet, "and in me de Marsay shall find his master!"

Canalis would have liked to write an important political work; but he was afraid of getting into trouble with French prose, a cruelly exacting medium to those who have acquired the habit of taking four Alexandrine lines to express one idea. Of all the poets of the day, only three—Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and de Vigny—have been able to conquer the double glory of a poet and a prose-writer, which was also achieved by Voltaire, Molière, and Rabelais. It is one of the rarest triumphs in French literature, and distinguishes a poet far above his fellows. Our poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was therefore very wise to try to find shelter for his chariot under the guardian roof of a Government office.

When he was made Master of Appeals, he felt the need of a secretary, a friend who might fill his place on many occasions, cook his affairs with publishers, see to his fame in the newspapers, and, at a pinch, support him in politics—in short, who would be his satellite. Several men, famous in art, science, or letters, have one or two such followers in Paris, a captain in the Guards, or a Court Chamberlain, who lives in the beams of their sunshine, a sort of aides-de-camp intrusted with delicate tasks, allowing themselves to be compromised at need, working round the idol's pedestal, not quite his equals and not quite his superiors, men bold in puffery, the first in every breach, covering his retreats, looking after his business, and devoted to him so long as their illusions last, or till their claims are satisfied. Some at last perceive that their Great Man is ungrateful; others feel that they are being made use of; many weary of the work; and few indeed are satisfied by the mild interchange of sentiment, the only reward to be looked for from an intimacy with a superior man, and which satisfied Ali, raised by Mahomet to his own level. Many, deluded by their self-con-

ceit, think themselves as clever as their Great Man. Devotion is rare, especially without reward and without hope, as Modeste conceived of it.

Nevertheless, a Menneval is occasionally to be met with; and, in Paris more than anywhere, men love to live in the shade and to work in silence, Benedictines who have lost their way in a world which has no monastery for them. These valiant lambs bear in their deeds and in their private lives the poetry which writers put into words. They are poets at heart, in their secluded meditations, in their tenderness, as others are poets on paper, in the fields of intellect, and at so much a verse, like Lord Byron—like all those who live, alas! by ink, which in these days is the water of Hippocrene, for which the Government is to blame.

It was a young consulting referendary of the Court of Exchequer who constituted himself the poet's secretary; he was attracted by the poet's fame, and the future prospects of this vaunted political genius, and led by the advice of Madame d'Espard, who thus played the Duchesse de Chaulieu's cards for her; and Canalis made much of him, as a speculator does of his first share-holder. The beginnings of this alliance had quite an air of friendship. The younger man had already gone through a course of the same kind with one of the Ministers who fell in 1827; but the Minister had taken care to find him a place in the Exchequer.

Ernest de la Brière, at that time seven-and-twenty, decorated with the Legion of Honor, with nothing in the world but the emoluments of his office, had the habit of business, and after hanging about the private room of the Prime Minister for four years, he knew a good deal. He was gentle, amiable, with an almost maidenly soul, full of good feeling, and he hated to be seen in the foreground. He loved his country, he yearned to be of use, but brilliancy dazzled him. If he had had his choice, the place of secretary to a Napoleon would have been more to his mind than that of Prime Minister.

Ernest, having become the friend of Canalis, did great things for him, but in eighteen months he became aware of the shallowness of a nature which was poetical merely in its literary expression. The truth of the homely proverb, "The

cowl does not make the monk," is especially applicable in literature. It is most rare to find a talent and character in harmony. A man's faculties are not the sum-total of the man. This discord, of which the manifestations are startling, is the outcome of an unexplored—a perhaps unexplorable—mystery. The brain and its products of every kind—since in the arts the hand of man carries out his brain—form a world apart that flourishes under the skull, perfectly independent of the feelings, of what are called the virtues of a citizen, of the head of a family, of a private householder. And yet this is not final; nothing in man is final. It is certain that a debauchee will exhaust his talent in orgies, and a drunkard drown it in his libations, while a good man can never acquire talent by wholesome decency; but it is also almost proved that Virgil, the poet of love, never loved a Dido; and that Rousseau, the pattern citizen, had pride enough to furnish forth a whole aristocracy. Nevertheless, Michael Angelo and Raphael showed the happy concord of talent and character. Hence talent is in men, as far as the individual is concerned, what beauty is in women—a promise. Let us give twofold admiration to the man whose heart and character are equally perfect with his talent.

Ernest, when he detected under the poet an ambitious egoist—the worst species of egoist, for some are amiable—felt a singular diffidence about leaving him. Honest souls do not easily break their bonds, especially those they have voluntarily accepted. The secretary, then, was on very good terms with the poet when Modeste's letter was flying through the mail, but on the good terms of constant self-effacement. La Brière felt he owed Canalis something for the frankness with which he had revealed himself. And indeed, in this man, who will be accounted great so long as he lives, and made much of, like Marmontel, his defects are the seamy side of brilliant qualities. But for his vanity, his pretentious conceit, he might not have been gifted with that sonorous verbiage which is a necessary instrument in the political life of the day. His shallowness is part of his rectitude and loyalty; his ostentation is paired with liberality. Society profits by the results; the motives may be left to God.

Still, when Modeste's letter arrived, Ernest had no illusions left as to Canalis. The two friends had just breakfasted, and were chatting in the poet's study; he was at that time living in ground-floor rooms looking out on a garden, beyond a courtyard.

"Ah!" cried Canalis, "I was saying the other day to Madame de Chaulieu that I must cast forth some new poem; admiration is running low, for it is some time since I have had any anonymous letters——"

"An unknown lady?"

"Unknown! A d'Este, and from le Havre! It is evidently an assumed name!"

And Canalis handed the letter to La Brière. This poem, this veiled enthusiasm, in short, Modeste's very heart, was recklessly exposed by the gesture of a coxcomb.

"It is a grand thing," said the young accountant, "thus to attract the chastest feelings, to compel a helpless woman to shake off the habits forced upon her by education, by nature, by society, to break through conventionalities. . . . What privileges genius commands! A letter like this in my hand, written by a girl, a genuine girl, without reservation, with enthusiasm . . ."

"Well?" said Canalis.

"Well, if you had suffered as much as Tasso, you ought to find it reward enough!" exclaimed La Brière.

"So we tell ourselves at the first or at the second letter," said Canalis. "But at the thirtieth! . . . but when we have discovered that the young enthusiast is an old hand! . . . but when at the end of the radiant path traveled over by the poet's imagination we have seen some English old maid sitting on a milestone and holding out her hand! . . . but when the angel—by post—turns into a poor creature, moderately good-looking, in search of a husband! . . . Well, then, the effervescence subsides."

"I am beginning to think," said La Brière, smiling, "that glory has something poisonous in it, like certain gorgeous flowers."

"Besides, my dear fellow," Canalis went on, "all these women, even when they are sincere, have an ideal to which

we rarely correspond. They never tell themselves that a poet is a man, and a tolerably vain one, as I am accused of being; it never occurs to them that he is rough-ridden by a sort of feverish excitement which makes him disagreeable and uncertain. They want him to be always great, always splendid; they never dream that talent is a disease; that Nathan lives on Florine; that d'Arthez is too fat; that Joseph Bridau is too thin; that Béranger can go on foot; that the divinity may foam at the mouth. A Lucien de Rubempré, a verse-writer, and a pretty fellow, is a Phœnix. So why go out of your way to receive bad compliments and sit under the cold shower-bath of a disillusioned woman's helpless stare?"

"Then the true poet," said La Brière, "ought to remain hidden, like God, in the center of his universe, and be visible only in his creations!"

"Then glory would be too dearly paid for," replied Canalis. "There is some good in life, I tell you," said he, taking a cup of tea. "When a woman of birth and beauty loves a poet, she does not hide herself in the gallery or the stage-box of a theater, like a duchess smitten by an actor; she feels strong enough and sufficiently protected by her beauty, by her fortune, by her name, to say, as in every epic poem, 'I am the nymph Calypso, and I love Telemachus.' Mystification is the resource of small minds. For some time now I have never answered such masqueraders——"

"Oh! how I could love a woman who had come to me!" cried La Brière, restraining a tear. "It may be said in reply, my dear Canalis, that it is never a poor creature that rises to the level of a celebrated man; she is too suspicious, too vain, too much afraid. It is always a star, a——"

"A Princess," said Canalis, with a shout of laughter, "who condescends to him, I suppose?—My dear fellow, such a thing happens once in a century. Such a passion is like the plant that flowers once in a hundred years—Princesses who are young, rich, and handsome have too much else to do; they are inclosed, like all rare plants, within a hedge of silly men, well born and well bred, and as empty as an elder-stem. My dream, alas! the crystal of my dream hung with garlands of flowers all the way hither from la Corrèze, and

with what fervour!—But no more of that!—it is in fragments, at my feet, long since.—No, no, every anonymous letter is a beggar! And what demands they make. Write to this young person, assuming her to be young and pretty, and you will see! You will have your hands full. One cannot in reason love every woman. Apollo, or at any rate, the Apollo Belvedere, is a consumptive dandy who must save his strength.”

“But when a woman comes to you like this,” argued Ernest, “her excuse must lie in her certainty that she can eclipse the most adored mistress, in tenderness, in beauty—and then a little curiosity——”

“Ah!” said Canalis, “my too youthful Ernest, you must allow me to be faithful to the fair Duchess, who is all my joy!”

“You are right—too right,” replied Ernest.

Nevertheless, the young secretary read and re-read *Modeste’s* letter, trying to guess the mind behind it.

“But there is nothing extravagant in it, no appeal to your genius, only to your heart,” he said to Canalis. “This perfume of modesty and the exchange proposed would tempt me——”

“Sign it yourself; answer her, and follow up the adventure to the end; it is a poor bargain that I offer you,” exclaimed Canalis, with a smile. “Go on; you will have something to tell me in three months time, if it lasts three months . . .”

Four days after *Modeste* received the following letter, written on handsome paper, under a double cover, and sealed with the arms of Canalis.

II.

To Mademoiselle O. d’Este-M.

“**MADemoisELLE**,—Admiration for great works—admitting that mine may be great—implies a certain holy simplicity which is a defense against irony and a justification, in the eyes of every tribunal, of the step you have taken in writing to me. Above all, I must thank you for

the pleasure which such a testimonial never fails to give, even when undeserved, for the writer of verse and the poet alike secretly believe themselves worthy of them, self-love is a form of matter so far from repellent of praise. The best proof of friendship that I can give to an unknown lady in return for this balm, which heals the stings of criticism, is surely to share with her the harvest of my experience, at the risk of scaring away her living illusions.

“Mademoiselle, the noblest palm a young girl can bear is that of a saintly, pure, and blameless life. Are you alone in the world? That is a sufficient answer. But if you have a family, a father or a mother, consider all the sorrows that a letter like yours may entail—written to a poet whom you do not know. Not every writer is an angel; they have their faults. Some are fickle, reckless, conceited, ambitious, dissipated; and imposing as innocence must be, chivalrous as a French poet may be, you might find more than one degenerate bard willing to encourage your affection only to betray it. Then your letter would not be interpreted as I read it. He would find a meaning in it which you have not put there, and which in your innocence you do not even suspect. Many authors, many natures!

“I am extremely flattered by your having thought me worthy to understand you; but if you had addressed yourself to an insincere talent, to a cynic whose writings were melancholy while his life was a continual carnival, you might have found at the end of your sublime imprudence some bad man, a dangler behind the scenes, or wine-shop hero! You, under the arbor of clematis where you dream over poetry, cannot smell the stale cigar-smoke which de-poetizes the manuscript; just as when you go to a ball, dressed in the dazzling products of the jeweler’s skill, you never think of the sinewy arms, the toilers in their shirt-sleeves, the wretched workshops whence spring these radiant flowers of handicraft.

“Go further. What is there in the solitary life of reverie that you lead—by the seashore, no doubt—to interest a poet whose task it is to divine everything, since he must describe everything? Our young girls here are so highly accom-

plished, that no daughter of Eve can vie with them! What reality was ever so good as a dream? And you now, you, a young girl brought up to be the duteous mother of a family, what would you gain by an initiation into the terrible excitement of a poet's life in this appalling capital, to be defined only as a hell we love?

"If you took up your pen, prompted by the wish to enliven your monotonous existence as an inquisitive girl, has not this a semblance of depravity? What meaning am I to attribute to your letter? Are you one of a caste of reprobates, seeking a friend at a distance? Are you cursed with ugliness, and do you feel you have a noble soul with none to trust? Alas!—a sad conclusion—you have either gone too far, or not far enough. Either let it end here, or, if you persist, tell me more than in the letter you have already written.

"But, Mademoiselle, if you are young, if you have a family, if you feel that you bear in your heart a heavenly spikenard, to be shed, as the Magdalen shed hers on Christ's feet, suffer yourself to be appreciated by some man who is worthy of you, and become what every good girl should be—an admirable wife, the virtuous mother of children. A poet is the poorest conquest any young woman can aspire to; he has too much vanity, too many salient angles which must run counter to the legitimate vanity of a wife, and bruise the tenderness which has no experience of life. The poet's wife should love him for long before marrying him; she must resign herself to be as charitable and as indulgent as the angels, to all the virtues of motherhood. These qualities, Mademoiselle, exist only as a germ in a young girl.

"Listen to the whole truth; do I not owe it to you in return for your intoxicating flattery? Though it may be glorious to marry a great celebrity, a woman soon discovers that a man, however superior, is but a man like all others. He then the less fulfills her hopes, because miracles are expected of him. A famous poet is then in the predicament of a woman whose overpraised beauty makes us say, 'I had pictured her as handsomer'; she does not answer

to the requirements of the portrait sketched by the same fairy to whom I owe your letter—Imagination!

“Again, great qualities of mind develop and flourish only in an invisible sphere; the poet’s wife sees only the unpleasant side of it; she sees the jewels made instead of wearing them. If the brilliancy of an exceptional position is what fascinates you, I warn you, its pleasures are soon exhausted. You would be provoked to find so much that is rough in a situation which from afar looks so smooth, so much ice on a glittering height! And then, as women never have set foot in the world of difficulty, they presently cease to value what they once admired, when they fancy that they have understood the workmanship at a glance.

“I will conclude with a last reflection, which you will do wrong to mis-read as an entreaty in disguise; it is the advice of a friend. A communion of souls cannot be complete excepting between two persons who are prepared to conceal nothing. Could you show yourself as you really are to a stranger? I pause before the consequences of such a notion.

“Accept, Mademoiselle, all the respect we owe to every woman, even to those who are unknown, and who wear a mask.”

To think that she had carried this letter between her skin and her stays, under the scorching busk, for a whole day! . . . that she had postponed reading it till an hour when everybody was asleep, till midnight, after waiting for the solemn hour in the pangs of a fiery imagination! . . . that she had blessed the poet, had read in fancy a thousand letters, had conceived of everything excepting this drop of cold water shed on the most diaphanous visions of fancy, and destroying them as prussic acid destroys life! . . . It was enough to make her hide her face—as Modeste did—under her sheets though she was alone, and put out the candle, and weep.

All this happened in the early days of July. Modeste presently got up, paced her room, and then opened the window. She wanted air. The scent of flowers came up to

her with the peculiar freshness of night-perfumes. The sea, lighted up by the moon, twinkled like a mirror. A night-ingale was singing in the Vilquins' park.

"Ah! there is the poet!" said Modeste to herself, her anger dying out.

The bitterest reflections crowded on her mind. She was stung to the quick; she wanted to read the letter again. She relighted the candle, and studied this careful production, till at last she heard the early voices of real life.

"He is in the right, and I am in the wrong," thought she. "But how could I expect to find one of Molière's old men under the star-spangled robe of a poet?"

When a woman or a girl is caught red-handed, she feels intense hatred of the witness, the first cause, or the object of her folly. And so Modeste, genuine, natural, and coy, felt her heart swell with a dreadful longing to trample on this essence of rectitude, and throw him over into some abyss of contradiction, to pay him back this stunning blow.

The pure-hearted child, whose head alone had been corrupted by her reading, by her sister's long agony, and by the perilous meditations of her solitude, was roused by a sunbeam falling on her face. She had lain for three hours tacking about on the immense ocean of doubt. Such nights are never forgotten.

Modeste went at once to her little lacquer table, her father's gift, and wrote a letter dictated by the infernal spirit of revenge which disports itself at the bottom of a young girl's heart.

III.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"MONSIEUR,—You are certainly a great poet, but you are something better—an honest man. After showing so much frank loyalty to a young girl on the verge of an abyss, have you enough to reply without the least hypocrisy or evasion to this question—

"Would you have written the letter I have received in

answer to mine—would your ideas, your language, have been the same if someone had whispered in your ear, what may be true: ‘Mademoiselle O. d’Este-M. has six millions of francs, and does not want to have a simpleton for her master’?

“For one moment admit this hypothesis for a fact. Be as honest with me as with yourself; fear nothing, I am superior to my twenty years, nothing that is genuine can injure you in my estimation. When I shall have read that confession, if indeed you vouchsafe to make it to me, you shall have an answer to your first letter.

“After admiring your talent, which is often sublime, allow me to do homage to your delicacy and rectitude, which compel me to sign myself

“Your humble servant,

“O. D’ESTE-M.”

When this note was placed in La Brière’s hands, he went out to walk on the Boulevard, tossed in his soul like a light bark in a tempest when the wind blows every minute from a different point of the compass. One of the young men of whom we meet so many—a true Parisian—would have summed up the case in these words, “An old hand!” But to a young fellow whose soul is lofty and refined, this sort of implied oath, this appeal to veracity, had the power to arouse the three judges that lurk at the bottom of every conscience. And Honor, Truth, and Justice, rising erect, cried aloud.

“Ah! my dear Ernest,” said Truth, “you certainly would not have written a lecture to a rich heiress. No, no, my boy, you would have set off, nose on for le Havre, to find out whether the young lady were handsome, and you would have been much aggrieved by the preference given to genius. And if you could only have tripped your friend up, and have made yourself acceptable in his place, Mademoiselle d’Este would have been divine!”—“What,” said Justice, “you pity yourselves, you men of brains or wit, and without cash, when you see rich girls married to men whom you would not employ as porters; you run amuck against the sordidness of the age, which is eager to wed money with money, and never to unite some fine young fellow full of talent to a rich

and high-born beauty; now here is one who rebels against the spirit of the time, and the poet retorts with a blow on her heart!"—"Rich or poor, young or old, handsome or plain, this girl is in the right, she has brains, she casts the poet into the mire of self-interest," cried Honor. "She deserves a sincere, noble, and honest reply, and, above all, the true expression of your thought! Examine yourself. Sound your heart, and purge it of its meannesses! What would Molière's Alceste say?"—And La Brière, starting from the Boulevard Poissonnière, lost in meditation, walked so slowly, that at the end of an hour he had but just reached the Boulevard des Capucines. He returned by the quays to the Exchequer, at that time situated near the Sainte-Chapelle. Instead of verifying accounts, he sat under the spell of his perplexities.

"She has not six millions, that is clear," said he to himself; "but that is not the question . . ."

Six days later Modeste received the following letter.

IV.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"**MADemoisELLE**,—You are not a d'Este. That is an assumed name to conceal your own. Are such revelations as you request due to a person who is false as to her identity? Attend; I will answer your question by asking another, Are you of illustrious parentage? of noble birth? of a family of townsfolk?

"Morality indeed cannot change; it is one; but its obligations vary in different spheres. As the sun sheds a different light on different aspects, producing the variety we admire, morality makes social duty conform to rank and position. What is a peccadillo in the soldier, is a crime in the general, and *vice versa*. The proprieties are not the same for a peasant girl who reaps the field, for a workman at fifteen sous a day, for the daughter of a small shopkeeper, for a young girl of the middle class, for the child of a rich commercial

house, for the heiress of a noble family, for a daughter of the race of Este. A king must not stoop to pick up a gold coin, and a workman must turn back to look for a piece of ten sous he has dropped, though both alike ought to observe the laws of economy. A d'Este owning six millions of francs may wear a broad-brimmed hat and feathers, flourish a riding whip, mount an Arab horse, and come as an Amazon in gold lace, followed by a groom, to say to a poet, 'I love poetry, and I desire to expiate the wrongs done by Leonora to Tasso,' while the daughter of a merchant would be simply ridiculous in imitating her.

"To what social class do you belong? Answer truly, and I will as truly reply to the question you ask me.

"Not being so happy as to know you, though already bound to you by a sort of poetical communion, I do not like to offer you any vulgar homage. It is already a triumph of mischief for you perhaps to have perplexed a man whose books are published."

The young accountant was not lacking in the skill of fence which a man of honor may allow himself. By return of post he received this reply.

V.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"You are more and more cautious, my dear poet. My father is a count. The most distinguished member of our family was a cardinal, in the days when cardinals were the equals of kings. At the present day our race, almost extinct, ends in me; but I have the necessary quarterings to admit me to any Court or any Chapter. In short, we are a match for the Canalis. Excuse my not forwarding our coat-of-arms.

"Try to write as sincerely as I do. I await your reply to know whether I may still subscribe myself, as now,

"Your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"What advantage the young person takes of her position!" exclaimed La Brière. "But is she truthful?"

It is not for nothing that a man has been for four years a Minister's private secretary; that he has lived in Paris and watched its intrigues; and the purest soul is always more or less intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of the Empress city. La Brière, rejoicing that he was not Canalis, secured a place in the mail-coach for le Havre, after writing a letter in which he promised a reply by a certain day, excusing the delay by the importance of the confession required of him, and the business of his office. He took the precaution of obtaining from the Director-General of the Mails a line enjoining silence and compliance on the head of the office at le Havre. He could thus wait to see Françoise Cochet arrive at the office, and quietly follow her home. Guided by her, he mounted the hill of Ingouville, and saw Modeste Mignon at the window of the Chalet.

"Well, Françoise?" asked the girl.

"Yes, Mademoiselle, I have got one."

Ernest, struck by this celestial fair type of beauty, turned on his heel, and inquired of a passer-by the name of the owner of that splendid residence.

"That?" asked the native, pointing to the great house.

"Yes, my good fellow."

"Oh, that belongs to Monsieur Vilquin, the richest ship-owner of the place, who does not know how much he has."

"I know of no Cardinal Vilquin in history," said the accountant to himself, as he went down the town again, to return to Paris.

Of course, he questioned the postmaster as to the Vilquin family. He learned that the Vilquins owned an immense fortune; that Monsieur Vilquin had a son and two daughters, one of them married to young Monsieur Althor. Prudence saved La Brière from showing any adverse interest in the Vilquins; the postmaster was already looking at him with suspicion.

"Is there no one at the house just now besides the family?" he asked.

"Just at present the Hérouville family are there. There

is some talk of a marriage between the young Duke and the second Mademoiselle Vilquin."

"There was a famous Cardinal d'Hérrouville," thought La Brière, "in the time of the Valois; and, under Henri IV., the terrible Marshal, who was created Duke.

Ernest returned, having seen enough of Modeste to dream of her; to believe that, rich or poor, if she had a noble soul, he would gladly make her Madame la Brière, and he determined to carry on the correspondence.

Do your utmost, hapless Frenchwomen, to remain unknown, to weave the very least little romance in the midst of a civilization which takes note on public squares of the hour when every hackney cab comes and goes, which counts every letter and stamps them twice at the exact hours when they are posted and when they are delivered, which numbers the houses, which registers each floor on the schedule of taxes, after making a list of the windows and doors, which ere long will have every acre of land, down to the smallest holdings and its most trifling details, laid down on the broad sheets of a survey—a giant's task, by command of a giant! Try, rash maidens, to evade—not, indeed, the eye of the police, but the ceaseless gossip which, in the poorest hamlet, scrutinizes your most trivial acts, counts the dishes at the Prefect's dessert, and sees the melon rind outside the door of the small annuitant, which tries to hear the chink of gold when Economy adds it to her treasury, and every evening, over the fire, sums up the incomes of the village, of the town, of the department!

Modeste, by a commonplace mistake, had escaped the most innocent espionage, for which Ernest already blamed himself. But what Parisian could endure to be the dupe of a little country girl? Never be duped! This odious maxim is a solvent for all man's noble sentiments. From the letter he wrote, where every lash of the scourge of conscience has left its mark, the reader may easily imagine the conflict of feeling to which the honest youth was a prey.

A few days later, Modeste, sitting at her window on a fine summer day, read the following pages.

VI.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

“**MADemoisELLE**,—Without hypocrisy, yes, if I had been sure that you had an immense fortune, I should have acted quite differently. Why? I have sought the reason, and it is this. There is in us an inborn feeling, developed, too, to an extreme by society, which urges us to seek and to seize happiness. Most men confound happiness with the means to happiness, and in their eyes fortune is its chief element. I should therefore have endeavored to please you, spurred by the social instinct that has in all ages made wealth a religion. At least, I think so. The wisdom which substitutes good sense for impulse is not to be looked for in a man who is still young; and when the prey is in sight, the animal instinct lurking in the heart of man urges him on. Thus, instead of a lecture, I should have sent you compliments and flattery.

“Should I have respected myself? I doubt it. Mademoiselle, in such a case, success brings absolution; but as to happiness, that is another matter. Should I not distrust my wife if I won her thus? Most certainly. Your action would, sooner or later, have resumed its true character; your husband, however great you might deem him, would at last have reproached you for having humiliated him; and you, sooner or later, might have learned to despise him. An ordinary man cuts the Gordian knot of a marriage for money with the sword of tyranny. A strong man forgives. The poet bewails himself. This, Mademoiselle, is the answer given by my honesty.

“Now, attend to me well. Yours is the triumph of having made me reflect deeply, both on you, whom I know not enough, and on myself, whom I know but little. You have had the skill to stir up the evil thoughts that grovel at the bottom of every heart; but in me the outcome has been a generous something, and I hail you with my most grateful blessings, as, at sea, we hail a lighthouse warning us of rocks where we might have been wrecked.

“And now for my confession, for I would not lose your

esteem nor my own for the price of all the treasures on earth. I was bent on knowing who you were. I have just come back from le Havre, where I saw Françoise Cochet, followed her to Ingouville, and saw you in your magnificent villa. You are as lovely as a poet's dream of woman; but I know not whether you are Mademoiselle Vilquin hidden under Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, or Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, hidden under Mademoiselle Vilquin. Though all is fair in war, I blushed at playing the spy, and I paused in my investigations. You piqued my curiosity; owe me no grudge for having been so womanly, is it not a poet's privilege? Now I have opened my heart to you; I have let you read it; you may believe in the sincerity of what I am about to add. Brief as was the glimpse I had of you, it was enough to modify my opinion. You are a poet and a poem even before being a woman. Yes, there is in you something more precious than beauty; you are the ideal of art, of fancy.

"The step you took, blamable in a young girl fated to a commonplace existence, is different in one gifted with such a character as I suppose you to have. Among the vast number of beings flung by chance into social life to make up a generation, there are exceptions. If your letter is the outcome of long poetical musing on the lot which the law reserves for women; if, carried away by the vocation of a superior and cultivated mind, you have wished to know something of the intimate life of a man to whom you concede the chance endowment of genius, in order to create a friendship with a soul akin to your own, exempt from vulgar conditions, and evading all the limitations of your sex—you are indeed an exception! The law which is good to measure the actions of the crowd is then very narrow to qualify your determination. But then the words of my first letter recur in all their meaning, 'You have done too much or not enough.'

"Once more accept my thanks for the service you have done me in compelling me to probe my heart; for you have cured me of the error, common enough in France, of regarding marriage as a means to fortune. In the midst of the disturbance of my conscience a sacred voice has spoken. I have

solemnly sworn to myself to make my own fortune, that my choice of a wife may never be determined by mercenary motives. Finally, I have blamed and repressed the unbecoming curiosity you aroused in me. 'You have not six millions. It would be impossible at le Havre that a young lady possessed of such a fortune should remain unknown, and you would have been betrayed by the pack of those aristocratic families which I see in pursuit of heiresses here in Paris, and which has sent the King's chief equerry on a visit to your Vilquins. So the sentiments I express are put forward as a positive rule, apart from all romance or statement of fact.

"Now, prove to me that you have one of those souls which we allow to disobey the common law, and you will grant in your mind that this second letter is in the right as well as the first. You are destined to a middle-class life; obey the iron law that holds society together. You are a superior woman, and I admire you; but if you are bent on yielding to the instinct you ought to repress, I pity you; these are the conditions of the social state. The admirable moral of the domestic epic *Clarissa Harlowe* is that the victim's love, though legitimate and sincere, leads to her ruin, because it has its rise and progress in defiance of her family. The family, silly and cruel as it is, is in its rights as against Lovelace. The family is society.

"Believe me, for a girl, as for a wife, her glory will always consist in restraining her ardent whims within the strictest limits of propriety. If I had a daughter who might become a Madame de Staël, I would wish that she might die at fifteen. Can you think, without the acutest regret, of your own child exhibited on the stage of celebrity and parading to win the applause of the mob? However high a woman may have raised herself in the secret poetry of her dreams, she must sacrifice her superiority on the altar of family life. Her soaring moods, her genius, her aspirations towards the lofty and the sublime, all the poem of a girl's soul belongs to the man she accepts, the children she may bear. I discern in you a secret ambition to enlarge the narrow circle of life to which every woman is condemned,

and to bring passion and love into your marriage. Ah! it is a beautiful dream; it is not impossible; it is difficult; but it has been realized to bring incompatible souls—forgive me a word which has become ridiculous—to desperation.

“If you look for a sort of Platonic regard, it can only lead you to despair in the future. If your letter was a sport, play no more. And so this little romance ends, does it not? It will not have been altogether barren of fruit; my honesty has taken up arms; and you, on your part, have learnt something certain about social life. Turn your gaze on real life, and throw the transient enthusiasm to which literature has given birth into the virtues of your sex. Farewell, Made-moiselle; do me the honor of granting me your esteem. Since seeing you—or her whom I believe to be you—your letter has seemed to me quite natural; so fair a flower would instinctively turn toward the sun of poetry. So love poetry still, as you doubtless love flowers and music, the sumptuous grandeur of the sea, the beauties of Nature—all as ornaments of the soul; but remember all I have had the honor of telling you about poets. Be sure you do not marry an ass; seek with care for the mate God has created for you. There are, take my word for it, many clever men capable of appreciating you and of making you happy. If I were rich, and you were poor, I would some day lay my fortune and my heart at your feet, for I believe you have a soul full of riches and of loyalty; and I would intrust you with my life and honor in the fullest confidence. Once more farewell, fair daughter of fair Eve.”

On reading this letter—at one gulp, like a drink of cold water in a desert—the mountain weighing on Modeste’s heart was lifted; then, perceiving the mistakes she had made in carrying out her scheme, she corrected them at once by making some wrappers for Françoise, on which she wrote her own address at Ingouville, desiring her to come no more to the Chalet. Thenceforth Françoise was to go home, place each letter as it came from Paris in one of these wrappers, and privily repost it in the town. Modeste promised herself

always to meet the postman, standing at the front door at the hour when he should pass.

As to the feelings excited in Modeste by this reply in which poor La Brière's noble heart throbbed under the brilliant mask of Canalis, they were as infinite as the waves which rolled up to die one after another on the shore, while, with her eyes fixed on the ocean, she gave herself up to the joy of having harpooned an angel's soul, so to speak, in the sea of Paris, of having discerned that in a really superior man the heart may sometimes be on a par with genius, and of having been well advised by the voice of presentiment. A mastering interest would henceforth inspire her life. The inclosure of her pretty home, the wires of her cage were broken. Thought could soar on widespread wings.

"Oh, dear father," she cried, looking across to the horizon, "make us very rich!"

Her answer, which Ernest de la Brière read five days later, will tell more than any comments can.

VII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"MY FRIEND,—Let me call you so—you have enchanted me, and I would not have you other than you are in this letter—the first; oh, let it not be the last! Who but a poet could ever have so perfectly excused and understood a girl?"

"I wish to speak to you with the same sincerity as that which dictated the opening lines of your letter.

"In the first place, happily, you do not know me. I can tell you gladly, that I am neither that frightful Mademoiselle Vilquin, nor that most noble and most faded Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, who hovers between thirty and fifty, and cannot make up her mind to a creditable age. Cardinal d'Hérouville flourished in Church history before the cardinal who is our only pride, for I do not count lieutenant-generals, or abbés who write small volumes of too big verse, as celebrities.

"Also, I do not live in the Vilquins' gorgeous villa; thank

God, not the millionth part of a drop of their blood chilled in many a counting-house flows in my veins. I am by birth partly German, partly a child of Southern France; in my brain lurks Teutonic sentiment, and in my blood the energy of the Provençal. I am of noble birth both on my father's and my mother's side; through my mother I have connections on every page of the *Almanach de Gotha*. But I have taken every precaution; it is not in the power of any man, not even of the police, to lift my disguise. I shall remain shrouded, unknown. As to myself and my belongings, *mes propres*, as they say in Normandy, be quite easy; I am at least as good-looking as the little person—happy, though she knows it not—on whom your eyes fell; and I do not think myself a pauper though I am not attended in my walks by ten sons of peers! I have even seen the contemptible farce played in my behoof of the heiress adored for her millions.

“Finally, make no attempt to find me, not even to win a bet. Alas! though free, I am guarded; in the first place, by myself, and then by very brave folks, who would not hesitate to stick a knife in your heart if you tried to penetrate this retreat. I say this, not to incite your courage or your curiosity; I believe no such sentiments are needed to arouse your interest in me, or to secure your attachment.

“I now proceed to reply to the second and greatly enlarged edition of your sermon.

“Shall I make a confession? When I found you so suspicious, taking me for a *Corinne*—how her improvisations have bored me!—I said to myself that many a tenth Muse had, ere now, led you by the tow-line of curiosity into her inmost vales, and proposed to you to taste the fruits of her schoolgirl Parnassus. . . . Be quite easy, my friend; though I love poetry, I have no copies of verses in my blotting-book; my stockings are, and will remain, perfectly white. You will not be bored by any ‘trifles’ in one or two volumes. In short, if I should ever say to you, ‘Come,’ you know now that you will not find an old maid, ugly and penniless. . . .

“Oh! my friend, if you could only know how much I regret that you should have come to le Havre! You have altered the aspect of what you call my romance. God alone

can weigh in His Almighty hands the treasure I had in store for a man great enough, confiding and clear-sighted enough, to set out on the strength of my letters, after having made his way step by step through all the recesses of my heart, and to come to our first meeting with the guilelessness of a child! I dreamed of such innocence in a genius; you have marred that treasure. I forgive you; you live in Paris; and, as you say, a poet is a man.

“Will you, therefore, take me to be a silly schoolgirl, cherishing the enchanted garden of illusions? Nay, do not amuse yourself with throwing stones at the broken windows of a long ruined castle. You, a man of wit, how is it that you never guessed that Mademoiselle d’Este had already read herself the lecture contained in your first letter? No, my dear poet, my first note was a pebble flung by a boy loitering along the highway, who thinks it fun to startle a landowner reading his tax-paper under shelter of his fruit-trees; or, rather, was the line carefully fixed by a fisherman from the top of a rock by the seashore, in hope of a miraculous draught.

“All you say so beautifully about family ties has my approbation. The man I shall love, and of whom I shall think myself worthy, shall have my heart and my life with my parents’ consent. I would neither distress nor startle them; I am certain of overruling them, and they have no prejudices. Again, I am strong enough to defy the illusions of my fancy. I have built a stronghold with my own hands, and have allowed it to be fortified by the unbounded devotion of those who watch over me as a treasure—not that I am not strong enough to defend myself in open fight; for, I may tell you, fate has clothed me in well-tempered armor on which is stamped the word DISDAIN. I have the deepest horror of everything which suggests self-interest, of all that is not entirely noble, pure, and disinterested. Without being romantic, I worship the beautiful and the ideal; though I have been romantic, all to myself, in my dreams. And so I could recognize the truth—true even to platitude—of what you wrote me as to social life.

“For the present, we are only, and can only be, friends.—

Why seek a friend among the unknown? you will ask. Your person is unknown to me; but your mind and heart are known to me; I like them, and I am conscious of infinite feelings in my soul, which demand a man of genius as their only confidant. I do not want the poem of my heart to be wasted; it shall be as beautiful for you as it would have been for God alone. What a precious thing is a trusty comrade to whom we may say what we will! Can you reject the unspoiled blossoms of a genuine girl? They will fly to you as gnats fly to the sunbeams. I am sure that your intellect has never before won you such a success—the confidences of a young girl. Listen to her prattle, accept the songs she has hitherto sung only for herself.

“By and by, if our souls are really akin, if on trial our characters agree, some day an old white-haired retainer will await you, standing by the roadside, and conduct you to a chalet, a villa, a castle, a palace—I do not yet know of what type that temple of Hymen may be—brown and gold, the colors of Austria, which marriage has made so powerful—nor whether such a conclusion may be possible; but confess that it is poetical, and that Mademoiselle d’Este has good ideas. Does she not leave you free? Does she come on jealous tiptoe to glance round Paris drawing-rooms? Does she lay on you the task of some high emprise, the chains which paladins of old voluntarily hung on their arm? What she asks of you is a really spiritual and mystical alliance.

“Come, come to my heart whenever you are unhappy, wounded, weary. Tell me everything, conceal nothing; I shall have balm for all your sorrows. I, my friend, am but twenty; but my mind is fifty, and I have unhappily known through another, my second self, the horrors and ecstasies of passion. I know all that the human heart can possibly contain of meanness and infamy, and yet I am the most honest girl living. No; I have no illusions left; but I have something better—faith and religion. There, I have played first in our game of confidences.

“Whoever my husband may be, if he is my own choice, he may sleep in peace; he might sail for the Indies, and on his return he would find me finishing the tapestry begun at

his departure ; no eyes would have looked into mine, no man's voice would have tainted the air in my ear ; in every stitch he might find a line of the poem of which he was the hero. Even if I should have been taken in by a fair and false exterior, that man would have every flower of my thought, every refinement of my tenderness, all the wordless sacrifices of proud and never suppliant resignation. Yes, I have vowed to myself never even to go out with my husband when he does not want me ; I will be the divinity of his hearth. This is my human religion.—But why should I not test and choose the man to whom I shall be what life is to the body ? Does a man ever find life an inconvenience ? What is a wife who annoys her husband ? Not life, but a sickness. By life, I mean the perfect health which makes every hour an enjoyment.

“To return to your letter, which will always be dear to me. Yes, jesting apart, it really contains what I had hoped for—the expression of prosaic sentiments, which are as necessary to family life as air is to the lungs, and without which happiness is out of the question. What I hoped for in my friend was, that he should act as an honest man, think as a poet, love as women love ; and this is now, beyond a doubt, no longer a chimera.

“Farewell, my friend. At present I am poor. That is one of the reasons which make me cling to my mask, my incognito, my impenetrable fortress.

“I read your last poem in the *Revue*, and with what delight, after having mastered the austere and secret loftiness of your soul !

“Will it aggrieve you greatly to be told that a girl beseeches God fervently in your behalf, that she makes you her one thought, and that you have no rival in her heart but her father and mother ? Can there be any reason why you should reject these pages that are full of you, that are written for you, that none but you will read ? Repay me in kind. I am as yet so little a woman, that your effusions, so long as they are genuine and full, will suffice for the happiness of your

“O. D'ESTE-M.”

“Great Heavens! am I in love with her already!” exclaimed the young referendary, when he discovered that he had been sitting for an hour with this letter in his hand after having read it. “What must I do next? She believes she is writing to our great poet. Ought I to carry on the deception? Is she a woman of forty, or a girl of twenty?”

Ernest was fascinated by the abyss of the unknown. The unknown is dark infinitude, and nothing is more enthralling. From that murky vastness flash fires which rend it from time to time, and light up visions like those of Martin. In a life as full as that of Canalis, an adventure of this kind is swept away like a cornflower among the boulders of a torrent; in that of a young referendary awaiting the reinstatement in power of the party of which his patron was the representative, and who, as a precaution, was dry-nursing Canalis for parliament, this pretty girl—his imagination persistently believed her to be the fair-haired damsel he had seen—was bound to find a place in his heart, and commit all the ravages caused by a romance when it breaks into a humdrum existence, like a wolf into a farmyard. So Ernest thought a great deal about his unknown correspondent, and he replied by the following letter—an elaborate and pretentious letter, but already betraying some passion by its tone of annoyance.

VIII.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

“**MADemoiselle**,—Is it quite fair in you to come and establish yourself in a poor poet's heart with the admitted purpose of leaving him to his fate if he should not be to your mind, and bequeathing to him perennial regrets after showing him, for a few minutes, an image of perfection were it but assumed, or, at least, a first promise of happiness?

“I was wanting in foresight when I requested the letter in which you have begun the display of your elegant assortment of ideas. A man may well fall in love with a stranger who can unite so much daring with so much originality, such fancy with such feeling. Who but would long to know you

after reading these first confidences? It is only by a really great effort that I preserve my balance when I think of you, for in you are combined all things that can disturb a man's heart and brain. So I take advantage of the remains of coolness I am able to preserve to put the case humbly before you.

"Do you believe, Mademoiselle, that letters which are more or less truthful in relation to life as it really is, and more or less insincere, since the letters we may write to each other must be the expression of the moment when we send them forth, and not the general outcome of our characters—do you believe, I ask, that however fine they may be, these letters can ever take the place of the expression of ourselves we should give through the practical evidence of daily life? Each man is twofold: There is the invisible life of the spirit, which letters may satisfy, and the mechanical life to which we attach, alas! more importance than you, at your age, can imagine. These two existences ought both to agree with the ideal you cherish, and this, it may be said, very rarely happens.

"The pure, spontaneous, disinterested homage of a solitary soul, at once well-informed and chaste, is one of those heavenly flowers whose color and fragrance are a consolation for every grief, every wound, every mortification entailed by a literary life in Paris; and I thank you with a fervor equal to your own; but after this poetical exchange of my woes in return for the pearls of your charity, what can you expect? I have neither the genius nor the splendid position of Lord Byron; above all, I have not the halo of his artificial damnation and his imaginary social grievances; but what would you have hoped for from him in similar circumstances? His friendship, no doubt. Well, he, who ought only to have been proud, was eaten up by an offensive and sickly vanity which discouraged friendship. I, who am a thousand times less great than he—may not I too have such discords of nature as make life unpleasing, and turn friendship into the most difficult burthen? What will you get in return for your dreams? The vexations of a life which will not be wholly yours.

“The bargain is a mad one, for this reason: The poetry of your dreams is but a plagiarism. A young German girl, not half-German like you, but wholly German, in the intoxication of her twenty years, adored Goethe; she made him her friend, her religion, her god, knowing that he was married. Frau Goethe, a good German soul, a poet’s wife, lent herself to this worship with very shrewd complacency—which failed to cure Bettina! But what was the end? The ecstatic married some substantial worthy German. Between ourselves, let us confess that a girl who should have made herself the handmaid of a genius, who should have raised herself to his level by understanding him, and have adored him piously till her death—as one of those divine figures might have done that painters have represented on the doors of their mystical shrines—and who, when Germany should lose Goethe, would have retired to some wilderness never more to see mankind—as Lord Bolingbroke’s lady did—let us confess that this girl would have lived forever in the poet’s glory as Mary Magdalen does in the blood-stained triumph of the Saviour.

“If this is sublime, what do you say to the converse of it?

“Being neither Lord Byron nor Goethe, but merely the writer of a few approved poems, I cannot claim the honors of worship. I have little in me of the martyr. I have a heart, but I am also ambitious, for I have to make my fortune, and I am yet young. See me as I am. The King’s favor and the patronage of his Ministers afford me a decent maintenance; I have all the habits of a very commonplace man. I go to evening parties exactly like the first fool you meet; but my carriage-wheels do not run, as the present times require, on ground made solid under me by securities in the State funds.

“Though I am not rich, I have not, on the other hand, the distinction conferred by a garret, by neglected work, by glory in penury, on certain men of greater merit than mine; for instance, on d’Arthez.

“What prosaic fifth act will you not find for the enchanted fancy of your young enthusiasm? Let it rest here. If I have been so happy as to seem to you an earthly wonder, you will have been to me something radiant and supernatural, like

a star that blazes and vanishes. Let nothing tarnish this episode in our lives. By remaining as we are, I may love you, going through one of those mad passions which break down every obstacle and light fires in the heart, which are alarming by their violence out of all proportion to their duration; and, supposing that I should succeed in pleasing you, we must end in the vulgarest way—marriage, housekeeping, and children! Oh, Bélise and Henriette Chrysale in one, can that be? So, farewell.”

IX.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

“MY FRIEND,—Your letter gave me as much pain as pleasure. Perhaps we may soon find it all pleasure to read each other’s letters. Understand me. We speak to God, we ask of Him many things; He remains speechless. Now I want to have from you the answers God never gives us. Cannot such a friendship as that of Mademoiselle de Gournay and Montaigne be repeated? Have you not known the household of Sismonde de Sismondi, at Geneva, the most touching home-life ever seen, and of which I have been told—something like that of the Marchese and Marchesa di Pescara, happy even in their old age? Good Heavens! is it impossible that there should be two harps, which, though at a distance, respond to each other as in a symphony, and vibrate so as to produce delicious harmony? Man alone, in all creation, is at once the harp, the musician, and the hearer.

“Do you see me fretting after the manner of ordinary women? Do not I know that you go into society and see the handsomest and cleverest women in Paris? Can I not imagine that one of those sirens might embrace you in her cold scales, and that it is she who has sent the answer that grieves me by its prosaic reflections? There is, my friend, something more beautiful than these flowers of Parisian blandishment; there is a flower that grows at the height of those Alpine peaks called men of genius; the pride of humanity, which they fructify by shedding on it the clouds

they collect with their heads in the skies; that flower I intend to cultivate and to make it open, for its wild, sweet perfumes will never fail us; they are perennial.

“Do me the honor to believe that in me there is nothing common. If I had been Bettina—for I know to whom you allude—I would never have been Frau von Arnim; and if I had been one of Lord Byron’s loves, I should at this moment be in a convent. You have touched me in a sensitive spot.

“You do not know me; you will know me. I feel in myself a sublime something which may be spoken of without vanity. God has implanted in my soul the root of that hybrid plant I have mentioned as native to Alpine heights, and I will not stick it in a flower-pot at my window to see it perish. No, that gorgeous and unique blossom, full of intoxicating fragrance, shall not be dragged through the vulgarities of life; it is yours—yours without a glance having blighted it, yours forever! Yes, dear one, yours are all my thoughts, even the most secret, the most mad; yours is the heart of a girl without reserve; yours an infinite affection. If I do not like you personally, I shall not marry.

“I can live the life of the heart, the life of your mind, of your feelings; they please me, and I shall always be, as I am now, your friend. There is beauty of nature in you, and that is enough for me. There lies my life. Do not disdain a pretty young handmaiden who, for her part, does not shrink from the idea of being some day the poet’s old housekeeper, in some sort his housewife, in some sort his common-sense, in some sort his wealth. This devoted maid, so precious in your lives, is pure, disinterested Friendship, to whom everything is revealed; who listens sometimes with a shake of the head, and who sits late, spinning by the light of the lamp, to be at hand when the poet comes home, soaked by the rain or out of sorts. This is my destiny if I am never to be a happy and faithfully attached wife: I can smile on one as on the other.

“And do not suppose that France will be deeply aggrieved if Mademoiselle d’Este does not give her two or three children,

or refuses even to be a Madame Vilquin, or the like! I, for my part, shall never be an old maid. I shall make myself a motherhood by beneficence, and by secretly sharing the existence of a great man, to whom I shall dedicate all my thoughts and all my earthly efforts. I have the utmost horror of the commonplace. If I should be free and rich—and I know I am young and handsome—I will never become the property of some simpleton under the excuse of his being the son of a peer of France; nor of some good-looking man, who would be the woman of the two; nor of any man who would make me blush twenty times a day at the thought that I was his. Be quite easy on that score.

“My father adores my wishes too much ever to contravene them. If my poet likes me, if I like him, the glorious palace of our love will be built so high that it will be absolutely inaccessible to misfortune. I am an eaglet; you will see it in my eye. I will not repeat what I have already told you, but I put it into fewer words when I assure you that I shall be of all women the most glad to be as completely the captive of love as I am at this moment of my father’s will.

“Come, my friend, let us reduce to the truth of romance what has come upon us by my free-will.

“A girl of lively imagination shut up in a turret is dying to run about in a park which only her eyes can explore; she invents a way of opening her bars, she springs out of windows, climbs the park wall, and goes off to sport at her neighbor’s. It is the eternal comedy! . . . Well, that girl is my soul, the neighboring park is your genius. Is it not most natural? Was a neighbor ever heard of who complained of his trellis being damaged by pretty feet?

“So much for the poet; but must the ultra-reasonable hero of Molière’s comedies have reasons? Here are plenty. My dear Géronte, marriages are commonly made in direct opposition to common-sense. A family makes inquiries as to a young man. If this Léandre, provided by a friendly gossip, or picked up in a ballroom, has robbed no one, if he has no visible stain, if he has as much money as is expected, if he has come from college or has had a legal training, thus satisfying

the usual ideas of education, he is allowed to call on a young lady, dressed to receive him from the moment when she gets up, instructed by her mother to be careful of what she says, and enjoined to keep anything of her soul or heart from being read in her countenance by assuming a set smile, like a dancer finishing a pirouette; she is armed with the most positive instructions as to the perils of showing her true character, and advised not to appear too distressingly knowing. The parents, when all the points of interest are satisfactorily settled between them, are simple-minded enough to recommend the young people to know all they can of each other during the few moments when they are alone, when they talk together, when they walk out—without any kind of freedom, for they know that they are tied already. Under such conditions a man dresses his mind as carefully as his person, and the girl on her side does the same. This miserable farce, carried on with gifts of flowers and jewels and places at the play, is what is called courting a girl.

“This is what I rebel against, and I mean to make legal marriage the outcome of a long marriage of souls. In all a girl’s life this is the only moment when she needs reflection, insight, and experience. Her liberty and happiness are at stake, and you place neither the dice nor the box in her hands; she bets on the game; she is but a looker-on. I have the right, the will, and the power to work out my own woe, and I will use them—as my mother did when, guided by instinct, she married the most generous, devoted, and loving of men, who bewitched her one evening by his beauty. I know you to be single, a poet, and handsome. You may be sure that I never should have chosen for my confidant one of your brethren in Apollo who was married. If my mother was attracted by a handsome face, which is perhaps the genius of form, why should not I be attracted by mind and form combined? Shall I know you better after studying you by correspondence than after beginning by the vulgar method of so many months of courting? ‘That is the question,’ saith Hamlet.

“My plan, my dear Chrysale, has at least the advantage of not compromising our persons. I know that love has its

illusions, and every illusion has its morrow. Therein lies the reason why so many lovers part who believed themselves bound for life. The true test lies in suffering and in happiness. When, after standing this double test of life, two beings have shown all their faults and good qualities, and have learnt each other's characters, they may go to the tomb hand in hand; but, my dear Argante, who tells you that our little drama has no future before it? . . . And, at any rate, shall we not have had the pleasure of our correspondence?

"I await your commands, Monsiegnur, and remain, with all my heart, yours obediently,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

X.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"You are a demon! I love you. Is that what you want, extraordinary girl? Perhaps you only wish to divert your leisure in the country by looking on at the follies of which a poet is capable? That would be a very wicked thing. Your two letters betray just enough of mischief to suggest the doubt to a Parisian. But I am no longer master of myself; my life and future hang on the answer you may send me. Tell me whether the certain possession of an unbounded affection given to you, in defiance of social conventionalities, can touch you; if you will allow me to visit you. There will still be ample room for doubt and agony of mind in the question whether I shall be personally agreeable to you. If your answer is favorable, I alter my life, and bid adieu to many vexations which we are so foolish as to call happiness.

"Happiness, my dear, beautiful, unknown one, is what you have dreamed it; a perfect fusion of feelings, an absolute harmony of souls, a keen sense of ideal beauty—so far as God vouchsafes it to us here below—stamped on the common actions of a life whose round we are bound to follow; above all constancy of heart, far more precious than what we call fidelity. Can anything be called a sacrifice when the

end is the supremest good, the dream of poets and of maidens, the poem to which on entering life—as soon as the spirit tries its wings—every lofty mind looks up with longing, brooding eyes, only to see it dashed to pieces against a stumbling-stone as hard as it is vulgar; for almost every man sees the foot of reality set down at once on that mysterious egg which hardly ever hatches out?

“I will not as yet tell you of myself, of my past, of my character, nor of an affection—almost motherly on one side, and on mine almost filial—in which you have already wrought a change with results in my life that may explain the word sacrifice. You have made me forgetful, not to say ungrateful. Is that enough to satisfy you? Oh! speak! say one word, and I shall love you till my eyes are closed in death, as Pescara loved his wife, as Romeo loved his Juliet, and faithfully. Our life—mine, at any rate—will be that untroubled happiness of which Dante speaks as being the atmosphere of his ‘Paradiso’—a poem infinitely superior to his ‘Inferno.’

“Strange to say, it is not myself, but you, whom I doubt in the long meditations in which I have allowed myself—like you, perhaps—to follow the chimerical course of a dream-life. Yes, dear one, I feel in me the strength to love thus, to go on my way to the tomb gently, slowly, always smiling, arm in arm with the woman I love, without a cloud on the fair weather of my soul. Yes, I have courage enough to look forward to our old age together, to see us both with white hair, like the venerable historian of Italy, still inspired by the same affection, but changed by the spirit of each season.

“You see, I can no longer be no more than your friend. Though Chrysale, Oronte, and Argante, you say, have come to life again in me, I am not yet so senile as to drink of a cup held by the fair hands of a veiled woman without feeling a fierce desire to tear away the domino, the mask, and to see her face. Either write no more, or give me hope. I must have a glimpse of you, or throw up the game. Must I say farewell? Will you allow me to sign myself,

“YOUR FRIEND?”

XI.

To Monsieur de Canalís.

“What flattery! How quickly has grave Anselme turned into a dashing Léandre! To what am I to ascribe such a change? Is it to the black I have scribbled on white, to the ideas which are to the flowers of my soul what a rose drawn in black-lead pencil is to the roses of the garden? Or to the remembrance of the girl you took for me, who is to my real self what a waiting-maid is to her mistress? Have we exchanged parts? Am I reason, and are you folly?

“A truce to this nonsense. Your letter made me acquainted with intoxicating joys of soul, the first I have not owed to family feelings. What, a poet has asked, are the ties of blood which weigh so heavily on ordinary souls in comparison with those which Heaven forges for us of mysterious sympathies? Let me thank you—no, there are no thanks for such things. Blessings on you for the happiness you have given me; may you be happy with the gladness you poured into my soul.

“You have explained to me some apparent injustice in social life. There is something brilliant in glory, something masculine which becomes men alone, and God has prohibited women from wearing this halo, while giving us love and tenderness with which to refresh the brows on which its awful light rests. I feel my mission, or rather, you have confirmed me in it.

“Sometimes, my friend, I have risen in the morning in a frame of inconceivable sweetness. A sort of peace, tender and divine, gave me a sense as of Heaven. My first thought was like a blessing. I used to call these mornings my German *levers*, to distinguish them from my southern sunsets, full of heroic deeds of battles, of Roman festivals, and of ardent verse. Well, after having read the letter into which you breathed a fever of impatience, I felt in my heart the lightness of one of those heavenly awakenings, when I loved air and nature, and felt myself destined to die for someone I loved. One of your poems, ‘*Le Chant d’une jeune fille*,’

describes these delicious hours when gladness is sweet, when prayer is a necessity, and it is my favorite piece. Shall I put all my flattery into one line: I think you worthy to be me!

“Your letter, though short, allowed me to read your heart. Yes, I could guess your tumultuous impulses, your excited curiosity, your plans, all the fagots carried (by whom) for the pyre of your heart. But I do not yet know enough of you to comply with your request. Understand, dear one, it is mystery which allows me the freedom that betrays the depths of my soul. When once we have met, farewell to our knowledge of each other.

“Shall we make a bargain? Was the first we made a bad one for you? You gained my esteem by it. And admiration supported by esteem is a great thing, my friend. First write me a sketch of your life in a few words; then tell me about your life in Paris, day by day, without any disguise, as if you were chatting to an old friend: well, then, after that I will carry our friendship a step further. I will see you, my friend, that I promise you; and it is a great deal.

“All this, dear, I warn you, is neither intrigue nor an adventure; it cannot result in any kind of ‘affair’ of gallantry, as you men say among yourselves. My life is involved in it, and moreover—a thing which sometimes causes me terrible remorse as to the thoughts I send flying to you in flocks—not less involved is the life of a father and mother I adore, whom I must satisfy in my choice, and who in my friend must find a son.

“How far can you lordly souls, to whom God has given the wings of angels, but not always their perfections, yield to the Family and its petty needs? A text I have pondered over already! Although before going forth to you I said in my heart, ‘Be bold!’ it has not quaked the less on the road, and I have never deceived myself either as to the roughness of the way or the difficulties of the mountain I had to climb. I have followed it all out in long meditations. Do I not know that men as eminent as you are have known the love they have inspired quite as well as that they have felt; that they have had more than one romance; and that you, above all, while cherishing those thorough-bred chimeras

which a woman will buy at any cost, have gone through more final than first chapters? And yet I could say to myself, 'Be bold!' because I have studied the geography of the high peaks of Humanity that you accuse of coldness—studied them more than you think. Did you not say of Byron and Goethe that they were two colossal masses of egoism and poetry? Ah, my friend, you there fall into the error of superficial minds; but it was perhaps generosity on your part, false modesty, or the hope of evading me.

"The vulgar may be allowed, but you may not, to regard the results of hard work as a development of the individual. Neither Lord Byron, nor Goethe, nor Walter Scott, nor Cuvier, nor any inventor belongs to himself; they are all the slaves of an idea; and this mysterious power is more jealous than a woman, it absorbs them, it makes them or kills them for its own advantage. The visible outcome of this concealed life resembles egoism in its effects; but how dare we say that a man who has sold himself for the delight, the instruction, or the greatness of his age, is an egoist? Is a mother accused of selfishness when she sacrifices everything for her child? Well, the detractors of genius do not discern its teeming maternity, that is all.

"The poet's life is so perpetual a sacrifice that he needs a gigantic organization to enable him to enjoy the pleasures of an ordinary life. Hence, if, like Molière, he insists on living the life of feelings while giving them expression in their most acute crises, what disasters come upon him! for to me the comic side of Molière, as overlaying his private life, is really horrible. The magnanimity of genius seems to me almost divine, and I have classed you with that noble family of egoists so called. Oh! if I had found shallowness, self-interest, and ambition where, as it is, I admire all the flowers of the soul that I love best, you cannot know what slow suffering would have consumed me. I found disappointment sitting at the portal of my sixteenth year; what should I have done if at twenty I had found fame a liar, and the man, who in his writings had expressed so many of the sentiments buried in my heart, incapable of understanding that heart when disclosed to him alone?

“Do you know, my friend, what would have become of me? I am going to admit you to the very depths of my soul. Well, I should have said to my father, ‘Bring me any son-in-law to your mind; I give up all free-will; get me married to please yourself!’—and the man might have been a notary, a banker, avaricious, stupid, provincial, as tiresome as a rainy day, as vulgar as a parish voter; he might have been a manufacturer or some brave but not brainless soldier—he would have found in me his most resigned and attentive slave. But then—dreadful suicide at every instant!—my soul would never have unfolded in the life-giving beams of the sun it worships. Not a murmur should ever have revealed to my father, my mother, or my children the suicide of the being who is at this moment shaking its prison-bars, flashing lightnings from my eyes, flying to you on outspread pinions, perching like a Polyhymnia in the corner of your study, breathing its atmosphere, and gazing at everything with a mildly inquisitive eye. Sometimes in the fields, where my husband might have taken me, I should have escaped a little way from my babes, and, seeing a lovely morning, would secretly have shed a few very bitter tears. Finally, in my heart, and in the corner of a drawer, I should have stored a little comfort for every girl betrayed by love, poor poetical souls dragged into torments by a smiling face!

“But I believe in you, my friend. This faith purifies the most fantastic notions of my secret ambition, and sometimes—see how frank I can be—I long to be in the middle of the story we have just begun, so assured am I of my feelings, such strength for love do I feel in my heart, such constancy founded on reason, such heroism to fulfill the duty I am creating for myself in case love should ever turn to duty.

“If it were given to you to follow me to the splendid seclusion where I picture our happiness, if you could know my schemes, you might utter some terrible sentence about madness, and I should perhaps be cruelly punished for sending so much poetry to a poet. Yes, I want to be a living spring, to be as inexhaustible as a beautiful country during the twenty years which nature allows us to shine in. I will keep satiety at a distance by refinements and variety. I will

be brave for my love as other women are for the world. I will vary happiness, lend wit to tenderness, and piquancy to faithfulness. I am ambitious; I will kill my past rivals, dispel superficial troubles by the sweetness, the proud self-devotion of a wife, and, for a whole lifetime, give such care to the nest as a bird gives for only a few days. This immense dower ought, and could, only be offered to a great man before being dropped into the mire of vulgar conventionality.

"Now, do you still think my first letter a mistake? A gust of some mysterious will flung me towards you, as a tempest may carry a rose-bush to the heart of a stately willow. And in the letter I keep here—next my heart—you have exclaimed like your ancestor when he set out for the crusades, 'It is God's will!'

"You will be saying, 'How she chatters!' All those about me say, 'Mademoiselle is very silent!'

"O. D'ESTE-M."

These letters seemed very original to those persons to whose kindness the author of the *Comédie Humaine* is beholden for them; but their admiration for this duel between two minds crossing their pens, while their faces were hidden by the strictest incognito, may not be generally shared. Of a hundred spectators, eighty perhaps will be tired of this assault of arms. So the respect due to the majority—even to a possible majority—in every country enjoying a constitutional government, advises the suppression of eleven more letters exchanged by Ernest and Modeste during the month of September; if a flattering majority should clamor for them, let us hope that it may one day afford me the means of restoring them here.

Tempted on by a wit as audacious as the heart beneath seemed to be adorable, the poor private secretary's really heroic feelings gave themselves the rein in those letters, which each reader's imagination may conceive of as finer than they really are, when picturing this harmony of two unfettered souls. Ernest, indeed, lived only on these dear scraps of paper, as a miser lives on those sent forth by the bank; while in Modeste a deep attachment had grown up in the place of

the pleasure of bringing excitement into a life of celebrity, and being, in spite of distance, its chief element. Ernest's affection completed Canalis' glory. Alas! it often takes two men to make one perfect lover, just as in literature a type can only be produced by a compound of the peculiarities of several different characters. How often has a woman said in a drawing-room after some intimate talk: "That man would be my ideal as to his soul, but I feel that I love that other who is no more than a fancy of my senses!"

The last letter written by Modeste, which here follows, gives us a glimpse of the *Isle of Pheasants*, whither the divagations of this correspondence were conducting our lovers.

XII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"Be at le Havre on Sunday; go into the church after the one o'clock service, walk round it two or three times, go out without speaking to anyone, without asking anybody a question; wear a white rose in your button-hole. Then return to Paris, you will there find an answer. This answer will not be such as you expect, for I must tell you, the future is not yet in my hands. But should I not be really mad to say *yes* without having seen you? When I have seen you, I can say *no* without offense. I am sure to remain unrecognized."

This was the letter Modeste had sent off the very day before that on which the futile struggle between herself and Dumay had taken place. So she was happy in looking forward with yearning impatience to Sunday, when her eyes would prove her intuitions, her heart, to be right or wrong—one of the most solemn moments in a woman's life, made, too, as romantic as the most enthusiastic girl could desire by three months of communion soul to soul.

Everybody, excepting her mother, had taken this torpor of expectancy for the placidity of innocence. However stringent the laws of family life and religious bonds, there

are still Julies d'Étanges and Clarissas—souls which, like a brimming cup, overflow under the divine touch. Was not Modeste splendid in the fierce energy she brought to bear on repressing her exuberant youth, and remaining concealed? Let us confess that the memory of her sister was more potent than any social limitations; she had sheathed her will in iron that she might not fail her father or her family. But what a turbulent upheaval! and how could a mother fail to perceive it?

On the following day Modeste and Madame Dumay led Madame Mignon out into the noonday sun to her bench among the flowers. The blind woman turned her pale withered face towards the ocean, inhaled the scent of the sea, and took Modeste's hand in her own, for the girl was sitting by her mother. Even as she was about to question her child, the mother hesitated between forgiveness and remonstrance, for she knew that this was love, and to her, as to the false Canalis, Modeste seemed exceptional.

"If only your father may be here in time! If he delays much longer, he will find you alone of those he loved! Promise me once more, Modeste, never to leave him," she said, with motherly persuasiveness.

Modeste raised her mother's hands to her lips, and kissed them softly, as she replied—

"Need I tell you so again?"

"Ah, my child; you see, I myself left my father to go to my husband! And my father was alone too; I was his only child. . . . Is that what God is punishing me for, I wonder?—All I ask you is to marry in agreement with your father's choice, to keep a place for him in your heart, not to sacrifice him to your happiness; to keep him in the bosom of your family. Before I lost my sight I made a note of my wishes; he will carry them out; I have enjoined on him to keep the whole of his fortune, not that I have thought of distrusting you, but can one ever be sure about a son-in-law? I, my child, was I prudent? A flash of an eye settled my whole life. Beauty, the most deceitful of shows, spoke the truth to me; but if it should ever be the same with you, poor child, swear to me that if appearances should carry you

away, as they did your mother, you would leave it to your father to make inquiries as to the character, the heart, and the previous life of the man of your choice, if you make a choice."

"I will never marry without my father's consent," replied Modeste.

On hearing this answer, her mother sat in complete silence, and her half-dead countenance showed that she was pondering on it, as blind people ponder, meditating on her daughter's tone in speaking it.

"You see, my child," said Madame Mignon, after a long silence, "the thing is this: If Caroline's wrong-doing is killing me by inches, your father would never survive yours; I know him; he would blow his brains out; there would be neither life nor happiness on earth for him . . ."

Modeste walked away a few steps, and returned in a minute.

"Why did you leave me?" asked Madame Mignon.

"You made me cry, mamma," said Modeste.

"Well, my angel, kiss me then. You love no one here? You have no one paying attentions to you?"

"No, mamma," said the little Jesuit.

"Can you swear to that?"

"Really, truly!" cried Modeste.

Madame Mignon said no more; she still doubted.

"In short, if you should choose a husband, your father would know all about it?"

"I promised that to my sister and to you, mother. What sin do you suppose I could commit when every minute I read on my finger, *Remember Bettina!*—Poor little sister!"

At the moment when the words, "Poor little sister!" were followed by an interval of silence between Modeste and her mother, from whose darkened eyes fell tears which Modeste could not check even by falling at Madame Mignon's knees and crying, "Forgive me; forgive me, mamma!"—at that very moment the worthy Dumay was mounting the hill of Ingouville at a rapid pace, an abnormal incident in the cashier's life.

Three letters had once brought them ruin; one had brought fortune back to them. That morning Dumay had received,

by the hand of a captain just returned from the China seas, the first news he had had of his patron and only friend.

*To Monsieur Dumay, formerly cashier to the
firm of Mignon.*

“MY DEAR DUMAY,—Barring misadventure by sea, I shall follow closely on the vessel by which I am forwarding this letter; I would not leave the ship to which I am accustomed. I told you, No news was to be good news; but the first words of this letter will rejoice you, for those words are, I have at least seven millions of francs! I am bringing a large part of it in indigo, a third in good bills on London and Paris, another third in bright gold. The money you sent me enabled me to make the sum I had determined on—two millions for each of the girls, and comfort for myself.

“I have been dealing wholesale in opium for the Canton houses, all ten times as rich as I am. You have no notion in Europe of what the rich China merchants are. I traveled from Asia Minor, where I could buy opium cheap, to Canton, where I sold it in bulk to the firms that deal in it.

“My last voyage was to the Malay Archipelago, where I could buy indigo of the first quality with the proceeds of the opium trade. Perhaps I may find that I have five or six hundred thousand francs more, as I am valuing my indigo only at cost price.

“I have been quite well all the time; never an ailment. That is the reward of traveling for one’s children! At the beginning of the second year I was able to purchase the *Mignon*, a nice brig of seven hundred tons burthen, built of teak, and lined with the same, and copper-bottomed; fitted throughout to suit my convenience. This, too, is worth something. The seafaring life, the constant change needed in my trading, and hard work, as being in a way my own captain on the high seas, have all kept me in excellent health.

“To speak of all this is to speak of my two girls and my dear wife! I hope that on hearing of my ruin the wretch who robbed me of my Bettina may have deserted her, and the wandering lamb have returned to the cottage. She, no doubt, will need a larger dower.

“My three women and my good Dumay—you have all four been constantly in my thoughts during these three years. Dumay, you are a rich man. Your share, besides my own fortune, amounts to five hundred and sixty thousand francs, which I am forwarding to you by a draft, payable to yourself only, by the firm of Mongenod, who are advised from New York. A few months more and I shall see you all again—well, I hope.

“Now, my dear Dumay, I write to you only, because I wish you to keep the secret of my fortune, and I leave it to you to prepare my dear ones for the joy of my return. I have had enough of trade, and I mean to leave le Havre.

“The choice of my sons-in-law is a very serious matter. It is my intention to repurchase the estate and château of la Bastie, to endow it with an entailed settlement of a hundred thousand francs a year at least, and to petition the King to confer my name and titles on one of my sons-in-law. You, my dear Dumay, know the misfortune that befell us in consequence of the fatal splendor given by wealth. By that I wrecked the honor of one of my daughters. I carried back to Java the most wretched of fathers—an unhappy Dutch merchant with nine millions of francs, whose two daughters had been both carried off by villains! We wept together like two children. So I will not have the amount of my fortune known.

“I shall not land at le Havre, but at Marseilles. My mate is a Provençal, an old retainer of my family, whom I have enabled to make a little fortune. Castagnould will have my instructions to repurchase la Bastie, and I shall dispose of my indigo through the firm of Mongenod. I shall place my money in the Bank of France, and come home to you, professing to have made no more than about a million francs in merchandise. My daughters will be reputed to have two hundred thousand francs apiece. Then my great business will be to decide which of my sons-in-law may be worthy to succeed to my name, my arms, and my titles, and to live with us; but they must both be, as you and I are, absolutely steady, firm, loyal, and honest men.

“I have never doubted you, old boy, for a single instant.

I have felt sure that my dear and admirable wife, with yours and yourself, will have drawn an impassable fence round my daughter, and that I may press a kiss full of hope on the pure brow of the angel that remains to me. Bettina-Caroline, if you have been able to screen her fault, will have a fortune. After trying war and trade, we will now go in for agriculture, and you must be our steward. Will that suit you?

"And so, old friend, you are master of your line of conduct to the family, to tell them, or to say nothing of my success. I trust to your judgment; you are to say just what you think right. In four years there may have been many changes of character. I make you the judge; I so greatly fear my wife's tender weakness with her daughters.

"Farewell, my dear old Dumay. Tell my wife and daughters that I have never failed to embrace them in my heart every day, morning and evening. The second draft, for forty thousand francs, payable, like the other, to you alone, is for my wife and daughters to go on with.

"Your master and friend,

"CHARLES MIGNON."

"Your father is coming home," said Madame Mignon to her daughter.

"What makes you think that, mamma?" asked Modeste.

"Nothing could make Dumay run but having that news to bring us."

Modeste, lost in her own thoughts, had not seen nor heard Dumay.

"Victory!" shouted the Lieutenant from the gate.

"Madame, the Colonel has never been ill, and he is coming home. . . . He is coming on the *Mignon*, a good ship of his own, which, with the cargo he describes to me, must be worth eight or nine hundred thousand francs. But he urgently begs you will say nothing about it; the disaster to our poor lost child has eaten deeply into his heart."

"He has made room in it for a grave then," said Madame Mignon.

"And he ascribes this disaster—as seems to me most

probable—to the greed which a large fortune excites in young men. My poor Colonel hopes to find the lost lamb among us here.—Let us rejoice among ourselves, and say nothing to anybody, not even to Latournelle if possible.—Mademoiselle,” he added to Modeste apart, “write a letter to your father to tell him of the loss in the family and its terrible consequences, so as to prepare him for the dreadful sight that awaits him; I will undertake that he shall get the letter before arriving at le Havre, for he will be obliged to come through Paris; write fully, you have plenty of time; I will take the letter on Monday; on Monday, no doubt, I shall have to go to Paris——”

Modeste was now afraid lest Dumay and Canalis should meet; she was eager to go up to her room and write to put off the assignation.

“Tell me, Mademoiselle,” Dumay went on in the humblest tone, but standing in her path, “that your father will find his daughter without a feeling in her heart but that which was in it when he left—of love for her mother.”

“I have sworn to my sister and my mother—I have sworn to myself to be my father’s comfort, his joy, and his pride, and—I—will be,” replied Modeste, with a haughty and scornful glance at Dumay. “Do not mar my joy at knowing that my father will soon be amongst us again by any offensive suspicions. A young girl’s heart cannot be hindered from beating; you do not wish me to be a mummy? I belong to my family; but my heart is my own. If I love anyone, my father and mother shall be told of it. Are you satisfied, Monsieur?”

“Thank you, Mademoiselle,” replied Dumay. “You have restored me to life. But you might at least have called me Dumay, even when giving me a slap in the face!”

“Swear to me,” said her mother, “that you have never exchanged a word or glance with any young man.”

“I can swear it,” said Modeste, smiling, and looking at Dumay, who was studying her, with a mischievous smile like a girl’s playing off some joke.

“Can she really be so false!” exclaimed Dumay, when Modeste had gone into the house.

"My daughter Modeste may have her faults," said the mother, "but she is incapable of a lie."

"Well, then, let us make ourselves easy," replied the Lieutenant, "and be satisfied that misfortune has closed its account with us."

"God grant it!" said Madame Mignon. "You will see him, Dumay; I can only hear him. . . . There is much sadness in my joy."

Modeste, meanwhile, though happy in the thought of her father's return, was, like Pierrette, distressed to see all her eggs broken. She had hoped for a larger fortune than Dumay had spoken of. She was ambitious for her poet, and wished for at least half of the six millions of which she had written in her second letter. Thus absorbed by her double happiness, and annoyed by the grievance of her comparative poverty, she sat down to her piano, the confidant of so many girls, who tell it their anger, and their wishes, expressing them in their way of playing.

Dumay was talking to his wife, walking to and fro below her window, confiding to her the secret of their good fortune, and questioning her as to her hopes, wishes, and intentions. Madame Dumay, like her husband, had no family but the Mignon family. The husband and wife decided on living in Provence, if the Count should go to Provence, and to leave their money to any child of Modeste's that might need it.

"Listen to Modeste," said Madame Mignon to them; "only a girl in love could compose such a melody without any knowledge of music."

Homes may burn, fortunes may collapse, fathers may come back from their travels, Empires may fall, cholera may ravage the town—a girl's love pursues its flight as nature keeps her course, or that horrible acid discovered by chemistry which might pierce through the earth if it were not absorbed in the center.

This is the ballad Modeste had improvised to some verses which must be quoted here, though they are to be found in the second volume of poems published by Dauriat; for, to

adapt them to the air, the young composer had broken the rhythm by some changes which might puzzle the admirers of a poet who is sometimes too precise.

And here, too, since modern typography allows of it, is Modeste's music, to which her exquisite expression lent the charm we admire in the greatest singers—a charm that no printing, were it phonetic or hieroglyphic, could ever represent.

A MAIDEN'S SONG



wake, my heart, for the soar-ing lark..... Wings her

upward flight as she chants her lay. Sleep no

more, my heart, for the vi - o - let..... Breathes her

in - cense to God at break of day. Ev - 'ry

blos - som re-fresh'd, and soft - ly un - clos - ing,

O - pens an eye to be - hold it - self.. fair. In each

chal - ice a gem, a dew - drop re - pos - ing,

Mir - rors its hues Ere it dies... in the air. We

MODESTE MIGNON

feel in the breeze that the an - gel of flow - ers Has

The first system of the musical score for 'Modeste Mignon' consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major (one flat), featuring a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, with chords and single notes. The bottom staff is the bass line, primarily consisting of quarter notes. The lyrics 'feel in the breeze that the an - gel of flow - ers Has' are written below the vocal staff.

kiss'd ev - 'ry rose as he pass'd in the night, Has

The second system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. The vocal line has a slight change in rhythm. The piano accompaniment includes some chords with repeat signs. The lyrics 'kiss'd ev - 'ry rose as he pass'd in the night, Has' are written below the vocal staff.

guard - ed their beau - ty through all the dark hours, Their

The third system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. The vocal line has a slight change in rhythm. The piano accompaniment includes some chords with repeat signs. The lyrics 'guard - ed their beau - ty through all the dark hours, Their' are written below the vocal staff.

first smile is his in the sweet morn - ing light...

The fourth system of the musical score concludes the piece. The vocal line ends with a half note. The piano accompaniment includes some chords with repeat signs. The lyrics 'first smile is his in the sweet morn - ing light...' are written below the vocal staff.

.... Then a - wake, my heart, for the soaring lark...

.... Wings her ear - ly flight, and chants her... lay.

Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi - o - let.....

.... To God her in - cense breathes at break of day;

MODESTE MIGNON

First system of musical notation. The vocal line (treble clef) begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi - o - let To". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with chords and single notes.

Second system of musical notation. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "God... her in - cense breathes at break of day." The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

Third system of musical notation. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

Fourth system of musical notation. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes. The system ends with a double bar line. Dynamics markings include *fz* (forzando) and *fz* with an accent mark.

"It is pretty," said Madame Dumay. "Modeste is very musical; that is all."

"She has the very devil in her!" exclaimed the cashier, for the mother's dread had entered into his soul and made his blood run cold.

"She is in love," said Madame Mignon.

By her success in communicating her conviction as to Modeste's secret passion, on the irrefragable evidence of that melody, Madame Mignon chilled the cashier's joy over his patron's return and success. The worthy Breton went off to the town to do his day's business at Gobenheim's; then, before going home to dinner, he called on the Latournelles to mention his fears, and once more to request their help and co-operation.

"Yes, my good friend," said Dumay on the threshold, as he took leave of the notary, "I am of Madame's opinion. She is in love, sure enough; beyond that the devil only knows! . . . I am disgraced!"

"Do not worry yourself, Dumay," said the little notary. "We certainly, among us all, must be a match for that little lady. Sooner or later every girl who is in love does something rash which betrays her secret; we will talk it over this evening."

So all these persons, devoted to the Mignon family, were still a prey to the same anxiety as had tormented them before the experiment that the old soldier had expected to be decisive. The futility of all these struggles so spurred Dumay's conscience that he would not go to Paris to fetch his fortune before he had discovered the clew to this enigma. All these hearts, caring far more for sentiment than for self-interest, understood that unless he found this daughter innocently pure, the Colonel might die of grief on finding Bettina dead and his wife blind. The unhappy Dumay's despair made so deep an impression on the Latournelles, that they forgot their loss of Exupère, whom they had sent off to Paris that morning. During the dinner hour, when the three were alone, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle and Butscha turned the matter over under every aspect, and considered every conceivable hypothesis.

"If Modeste were in love with anyone at le Havre, she would have quaked last night," said Madame Latournelle, "so her lover must be elsewhere."

"She swore this morning to her mother, in Dumay's presence, that she had not exchanged a glance or a word with a living soul," said the notary.

"Then she loves as I do!" said Butscha.

"And how do you love, my poor boy?" asked Madame Latournelle.

"Madame," replied the little hunchback, "I love all to myself, from afar, almost as far as from hence to the stars."

"And how do you get there, you great goose?" said Madame Latournelle, smiling at him.

"Ah, Madame, what you take to be a hump is the sheath for my wings."

"Then this explains your seal!" exclaimed the lawyer.

The clerk's seal was a star, with the motto, *Fulgens, sequar*—Shine, and I will follow you—the device of the house of Chastillonest.

"A beautiful creature may be as diffident as the most hideous," said Butscha, as if talking to himself. "Modeste is quite clever enough to have feared lest she should be loved only for her beauty."

Hunchbacks are wonderful creatures, and due entirely to civilization; for, in the scheme of nature, weak or deformed beings ought to perish. A curvature or twist of the spinal column gives to these men, who seem to be Nature's outcasts, a flashing look, in which is concentrated a greater quantity of nervous fluids than other men can command, in the very center where they are elaborated and act, and whence they are set forth like a light to vivify their inmost being. Certain forces are the result, detected occasionally by magnetism, but most frequently lost in the waste places of the spiritual world. Try to find a hunchback who is not gifted in some remarkable way, either with a cheerful wit, superlative malignity, or sublime kindness. These beings, privileged beings though they know it not, live within themselves as Butscha did, when they have not exhausted their splendidly

concentrated powers in the battle they have fought to conquer obstacles and remain alive.

In this way we may explain the superstitious and popular traditions, which we owe to the belief in gnomes, in frightful dwarfs, in misshapen fairies—the whole race of bottles, as Rabelais has it, that contain rare balsams and elixirs.

Thus Butscha almost read Modeste; and with the eagerness of a hopeless lover, of a slave ever ready to die like the soldiers who, deserted and alone amid Russian snows, still shouted "*Vive l'Empereur!*" he dreamed of discovering her secret for himself alone.

As his chief and Madame Latournelle walked up to the Chalet, he followed them with a very anxious mien, for it was imperative that he should conceal from every watchful eye, from every listening ear, the snare in which he meant to entrap the girl. There should be a flashing glance, a start detected, as when a surgeon lays his finger on a hidden injury.

That evening Gobenheim did not join them; Butscha was Monsieur Dumay's partner against Monsieur and Madame Latournelle. At about nine o'clock, while Modeste was absent preparing her mother's room, Madame Mignon and her friends could talk openly; but the poor clerk, stricken by the conviction which had come on him too, seemed as far away from the discussion as Gobenheim had been the night before.

"Why, Butscha, what ails you?" exclaimed Madame Latournelle, astonished at him. "One might think you had lost all your relations!"

A tear started to the poor fellow's eye—a foundling, deserted by a Swedish sailor, and his mother dead of grief in the workhouse!

"I have no one in the world but you," he replied in husky tones; "and your compassion is too pious ever to be withdrawn from me, for I will never cease to deserve your kindness."

The answer struck an equally sensitive chord in those present, that of delicacy.

"We all love you, Monsieur Butscha," said Madame Mignon with emotion.

"I have six hundred thousand francs of my own!" cried the worthy Dumay. "You shall be a notary at le Havre, and Latournelle's successor."

The American, for her part, had taken the poor hunchback's hand and pressed it.

"You have six hundred thousand francs!" cried Latournelle, pricking up his ears at this speech, "and you let these ladies stay here! And Modeste has no horse! And she no longer has lessons in music, in painting, in——"

"Oh, he has only had the money a few hours," exclaimed the American wife.

"Hush!" said Madame Mignon. While this was going on, the dignified Madame Latournelle had recovered herself. She turned to Butscha.

"My dear boy," said she, "you have so much affection around you, that I never considered the particular bearing of a common phrase as applied to you; but you may thank me for the blunder, since it has shown you what friends you have earned by your beautiful nature."

"Then you have some news of Monsieur Mignon?" asked the notary.

"He is coming home," said Madame Mignon; "but we must keep it secret.—When my husband hears how Butscha has clung to us, and that he has shown us the warmest and most disinterested friendship when the world turned its back on us, he will not leave you to provide for him entirely, Dumay. And so, my friend," she added, trying to turn towards Butscha, "you may proceed at once to deal with Latournelle——"

"He is of full age, five-and-twenty," said Latournelle. "And, on my part, it is paying off a debt, my dear fellow, if I give you the refusal of my practice."

Butscha kissed Madame Mignon's hand, wetting it with tears, and showed a tearful face when Modeste opened the drawing-room door.

"Who has been distressing my mysterious dwarf?" she asked.

"Oh, Mademoiselle, do we children nursed in sorrow ever shed tears of grief? I have just received such marks of

attachment, that I was moved with tenderness for all those in whom I liked to believe I had found relations. I am to be a notary; I may grow rich. Ah, ha! Poor Butscha may some day be rich Butscha. You do not know what audacity exists in this abortion!" he exclaimed.

The hunchback struck himself hard on his cavernous breast, and placed himself in front of the fireplace after giving Modeste a look that stole like a gleam from under his heavy, drooping eyelids; for in this unforeseen conjuncture he had found his chance of sounding his sovereign lady's heart.

For an instant Dumay fancied that the clerk had dared aspire to Modeste; he exchanged looks with his friends which were understood by all, and which made them gaze at the little hunchback with a sort of dread mingled with curiosity.

"I—I too—have my dreams," Butscha went on, not taking his eyes off Modeste.

The girl looked down instinctively, in a way which was a revelation to the clerk. "You love romances; allow me, in the midst of my joy, to confide my secret to you, and you will tell me if the end of the romance I have dreamed of for my life is possible. . . . If not, of what use is fortune? To me, more than to anyone else, money is happiness, since to me happiness means the enriching of the one I love! You know so many things, Mademoiselle, tell me whether a man can be loved independently of his person—handsome or ugly, and for his soul alone."

Modeste looked up at Butscha. It was a terrible, questioning look, for at this moment Modeste shared Dumay's suspicions. "When I am rich, I shall look out for some poor but beautiful girl, a foundling like myself, who has suffered much, and is very unhappy; I will write to her, comfort her, be her good genius; she shall read my heart, my soul; she shall have all my wealth, in both kinds—my gold, offered with great delicacy, and my mind, beautified by all the graces which the misfortune of birth has denied to my grotesque form! And I will remain hidden, like a cause which science seeks. God perhaps is not beautiful.—The girl will naturally be curious and want to see me; but I shall tell her that I am a monster of ugliness, I will describe myself as hideous——"

At this, Modeste looked hard in his face. If she had said, "What do you know of my love affairs?" it could not have been more explicit.

"If I am so happy as to be loved for the poetry of my soul!—if, some day, I might seem to that woman to be only slightly deformed, confess that I shall be happier than the handsomest of men, than even a man of genius beloved by such a heavenly creature as you are——"

The blush that mounted to Modeste's face betrayed almost the whole of the girl's secret to the hunchback.

"Well, now, if a man can enrich the girl he loves, and charm her heart irrespective of his person, is that the way to be loved?—This has been the poor hunchback's dream—yesterday's dream; for to-day your adorable mother has given me the clew to my future treasure by promising to facilitate my acquiring an office and connection. Still, before becoming a Gobenheim, I must know whether such a horrible transformation will achieve its end. What do you think, Mademoiselle, on your part?"

Modeste was so taken by surprise, that she did not observe Butscha's appeal to her judgment. The lover's snare was better contrived than the soldier's; for the poor girl, quite bewildered, stood speechless.

"Poor Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle to her husband, "is he going mad?"

"You want to play the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast," said Modeste at last, "and you forget that the Beast is turned into Prince Charming."

"Do you think so?" said the dwarf. "Now I have always imagined that transformation to symbolize the phenomenon of the soul becoming visible and eclipsing the body by its radiant glory. If I should never be loved, I shall remain invisible, that is all!—You and yours, Madame," said he to his mistress, "instead of having a dwarf at your command, will have a life and fortune."

Butscha returned to his seat, and said to the three players, affecting perfect calmness—

"Who deals?"

But to himself he was saying with grief, "She wants to

be loved for her own sake; she is corresponding with some sham great man, and how far has she gone?"

"My dear mamma, it has struck a quarter to ten," said Modeste to her mother.

Madame Mignon bid her friends good-night, and went to bed.

Those who insist on loving in secret may be watched over by Pyrenean dogs, mothers, Dumays, Latournelles—they are in no danger from these; but a lover! It is diamond cut diamond, fire against fire, wit against wit, a perfect equation, of which the terms are equal and interchangeable.

On Sunday morning Butscha was beforehand with Madame Latournelle, who always went to escort Modeste to Mass, and stayed cruising about outside the Chalet, waiting for the postman.

"Have you a letter for Mademoiselle Modeste this morning?" he asked of that humble functionary as he approached.

"No, Monsieur, no——"

"We have been good customers of the Government for some time past!" exclaimed the clerk.

"I believe you!" replied the postman.

Modeste from her room saw and heard this little interview; she posted herself at her window at this hour, behind the Venetian shutter, to watch for the postman.

She went down and out into the little garden, where, in a husky voice, she called out, "Monsieur Butscha."

"Here am I, Mademoiselle," said the hunchback, coming to the little gate, which Modeste herself opened.

"Will you tell me whether you include among your titles to the affection of a woman the disgraceful espionage you choose to exercise?" asked the girl, trying to overwhelm her slave by her gaze and queenly attitude.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," he proudly replied. "I had never imagined," he added in a low voice, "that a worm could do good service to a star! But so it is. Would you rather have your heart read by your mother, Monsieur Dumay, and Madame Latournelle, than by a poor creature, almost an outcast from life, who is yours as much as one of the flowers you cut to gratify you for a moment? They all know that

you love; I alone know how. Take me as you would take a watch-dog; I will obey you, I will protect you, I will never bark, and I will have no opinions about you. All I ask is that you will let me be of some use to you. Your father placed Dumay in your menagerie; try a Butscha, and you will find it quite another story! A poor Butscha, who asks for nothing, not even for a bone!"

"Well, I will take you on trial," said Modeste, who only wished to be rid of so sharp a guardian. "Go at once to all the hotels at Gravelle and le Havre, and ask if a M. Arthur has arrived from England——"

"Listen, Mademoiselle," said Butscha respectfully, but interrupting Modeste, "I will just go for a walk on the beach, and that will be all that is necessary, for you do not wish me to go to church, that is all."

Modeste looked at the hunchback in blank astonishment.

"Yes, Mademoiselle, though you have wrapped your face in wadding and a handkerchief, you have no cold; though you have a double veil to your hat, it is only to see without being seen."

"What endows you with so much penetration?" cried Modeste, reddening.

"Why, Mademoiselle, you have no stays on! A cold would not require you to disguise your figure by putting on several petticoats, to hide your hands in old gloves, and your pretty feet in hideous boots, to dress yourself anyhow, to——"

"That will do," said she. "But, now, how am I sure that you will obey me?"

"My master wanted to go to Sainte-Adresse, and was rather put out; but as he is really very kind, he would not deprive me of my Sunday. Well, I will propose to him that we should go——"

"Go then, and I shall trust to you——"

"Are you sure you will not want me at le Havre?"

"Quite.—Listen, mysterious dwarf, and look up," she said, pointing to a cloudless sky. "Can you see the track left by the bird that flew across just now? Well, my actions, as pure as that pure air, leave no more trace than that. Reassure Dumay and the Latournelles, reassure my mother; and be sure

that this hand " (and she held out to him a slender little hand with upturned finger-tips, transparent to the light) " will never be given away, never even warmed by the kiss of what is called a lover, before my father's return."

" And why do you want me to keep away from church to-day? "

" Do you cross-question me, after all I have done you the honor to tell you and require of you? "

Butscha bowed without replying, and hastened home, enraptured at thus entering the service of his anonymous mistress.

An hour later Monsieur and Madame Latournelle came to fetch Modeste, who complained of a dreadful toothache.

" I really had not strength to dress," said she.

" Well, then, stay at home," said the notary's wife.

" No, no. I will go and pray for my father's safe return," replied Modeste; " and I thought that if I wrapped up well, it would do me more good than harm to go out."

So Mademoiselle Mignon set out alone with Latournelle. She would not take his arm for fear of being questioned as to the internal tremor that agitated her at the idea of so soon seeing her great poet. One look, the first, was about to decide her future existence.

Is there in the life of man a more exquisite moment than that of the first promised meeting? Can the feelings that lie buried in his heart, and that then burst into life, ever be known again? Can he ever again feel the pleasure that he finds, as did Ernest de la Brière, in choosing his best razors, his finest shirts, spotless collars, and impeccable clothes? We deify everything that is associated with that supreme hour. We imagine poems in our hearts, secret poems as beautiful as the woman's, and on the day when each reads the other's soul all is over! Is it not the same with these things as with the blossom of those wild fruits, at once sharp and sweet, lost in forest depths, the delight of the sun, no doubt; or, as Canalis says in " The Maiden's Song," the gladness of the plant itself which the Angel of Flowers has allowed to see its own beauty.

This leads to the reflection that La Brière, a modest soul,

like many another penurious being for whom life begins with toil and money difficulties, had never yet been loved. He had arrived at le Havre the night before, and had at once gone to bed, like a coquette, to efface every trace of his journey; and he had now, after taking a bath, just completed a carefully advantageous toilet. This, perhaps, is the place for giving a full-length portrait of him, if only to justify the last letter Modeste was ever to write to him.

Born of a good family at Toulouse, distantly connected with that Minister who took him under his patronage, Ernest has the well-bred air which comes of an education begun from the cradle; the habit of business has given it solidity without effort, for pedantry is the rock on which precocious gravity is commonly wrecked. Of medium height, his face is attractively refined and gentle; his complexion warm, though colorless, was at that time set off by a slender mustache and a small imperial, a *virgule à la Mazarin*. But for these manly witnesses, he would, perhaps, have looked too much like a girl dressed up, so delicate is the cut of his face and lips, so natural is it to attribute to a woman teeth of transparent enamel and almost artificial evenness. Add to these feminine characteristics a voice as sweet as his looks, as gentle as his turquoise blue eyes, with Oriental lids, and you will perfectly understand how it was that the Minister had nicknamed his young private secretary Mademoiselle de la Brière. His broad, smooth forehead, framed under thick black hair, has a dreamy look that does not contradict the expression of his countenance, which is wholly melancholy. The prominence of the eyebrows, though delicately arched, overshadows the eyes, and adds to this look of melancholy by the sadness—a physical sadness, so to speak—that the eyelids give when they half close the eyes. This secret bashfulness, to which we give the name of modesty, characterizes his features and person. The whole result will, perhaps, be better understood if we add that the theory of perfect drawing demands greater length in the shape of the head, more space between the chin, which ends abruptly, and the forehead, on which the hair grows too low. Thus the face looks flattened. Work had already graven a furrow between the eyebrows, which were

thick, and too nearly met, like those of all jealous natures. Though La Brière was as yet slight, his figure was one of those which, developing late, are unexpectedly stout at the age of thirty.

The young man might very well have typified, to those who are familiar with French history, the royal and mysterious personality of Louis XIII., with his melancholy diffidence for no known reason, pallid under his crown, loving the fatigue of hunting, and hating work; so timid with his mistress as to respect her virtue, so indifferent to his friend as to leave him to be beheaded; explicable only by his remorse at having avenged his father on his mother—either a Catholic Hamlet or the victim of some incurable malady. But the canker-worm which paled the King's cheek and unnerved his strength, was as yet, in Ernest, no more than simple distrust of himself, the shyness of a man to whom no woman had ever said, "How I love you!" and, above all, wasted self-sacrifice. After hearing the knell of a monarchy in the fall of a minister, the poor boy had found in Canalis a rock hidden under tempting mosses; he was seeking a despotism to worship; and this uneasiness, that of a dog in search of a master, gave him the expression of the king who found his. These clouds and feelings, this "pale cast" over his whole person, made his face far more attractive than the young secretary himself imagined, annoyed as he was sometimes to find himself classed by women as a *beau ténébreux*—gloomily handsome; a style gone quite out of fashion at a time when every man would gladly keep the clarions of advertisement for his own exclusive use.

So Ernest the diffident had sought the adornment of the most fashionable clothes. For this interview, when everything would depend on first sight, he donned black trousers and carefully polished boots, a sulphur-colored waistcoat, revealing an excessively fine shirt fastened with opal studs, a black necktie, and a short blue coat, which looked as if it had been glued to his back and waist by some new process; his rosette graced the button-hole. He wore smart kid gloves of the color of Florentine bronze, and held in his left hand a light cane and his hat, with a certain Louis-quatorze air;

thus showing, as the sacred place demanded, his carefully combed hair, on which the light shed satin-like reflections. Standing sentry under the porch from the very beginning of the service, he studied the church while watching all the Christians, more especially those in petticoats, who came to dip their fingers in the holy water.

As Modeste came in, an inner voice cried out, "'Tis he!" That coat and figure, so essentially Parisian, that rosette, the gloves, the walking-stick, the scented hair—none of these things were native to le Havre. And when La Brière turned to look at the notary's tall and showy wife, the little notary himself and the bundle—a word dedicated to this sense by women—under which Modeste had concealed herself, though she was fully prepared, the poor child was stricken to the heart by the aspect of this romantic countenance, in the bright daylight from the open door. She could not be mistaken; a small white rose almost hid the rosette. Would Ernest recognize his unknown fair hidden under an old hat and a double veil? Modeste was so fearful of the clairvoyance of love that she walked with an elderly shuffle.

"Wife," said Latournelle, as he went to his place, "that man does not belong to le Havre."

"So many strangers come through," replied the lady.

"But do strangers ever think of coming to see our church, which is not more than two centuries old?"

Ernest remained in the porch all through the service without seeing any woman who realized his hopes. Modeste, on her part, could not control her trembling till near the end. She was agitated by joys which she alone could have described. At last she heard on the pavement the step of a gentleman, for Mass being over, Ernest was walking round the church, where no one remained but the *dilettanti* of prayer, who became to him the object of anxious and piercing scrutiny. He remarked the excessive trembling of the prayer-book held by the veiled lady as he passed her; and as she was the only one who hid her face, he conceived some suspicions, confirmed by Modeste's dress, which he studied with the care of an inquisitive lover.

When Madame Latournelle left the church, he followed her

at a decent distance, and saw her, with Modeste, go into the house in the Rue Royale, where Mademoiselle Mignon usually waited till the hour of vespers. Ernest studied the house, decorated with escutcheons, and asked of a passer-by the name of the owner, who was mentioned almost with pride as Monsieur Latournelle, the first notary of le Havre.

As he lounged down the Rue Royale, trying to catch a glimpse of the interior of the house, Modeste could see her lover; she then declared herself to be too ill to attend vespers, and Madame Latournelle kept her company. So poor Ernest had his cruise for his pains. He dared not go to loiter about Ingouville; he made it a point of honor to obey, and returned to Paris after writing a letter while waiting for the coach, and posting it for Françoise Cochet to receive next morning with the postmark of le Havre.

Monsieur and Madame Latournelle dined at the Chalet every Sunday, taking Modeste home after vespers. As soon as the young lady felt better, they all went up to Ingouville, followed by Butscha. Modeste, quite happy, now dressed herself beautifully. As she went down to dinner she forgot all about her disguise of the morning and her cold, and sang—

“Night and sleep begone! My heart, the violet
To God her incense breathes at break of day!”

Butscha felt a thrill as he beheld Modeste, she seemed to him so completely changed; for the wings of love fluttered, as it were, on her shoulders, she looked like a sylph, and her cheeks glowed with the divine hue of happiness.

“Whose words are those which you have set to such a pretty air?” Madame Mignon asked her daughter.

“They are by Canalis, mamma,” she replied, turning in an instant to the finest crimson, from her neck to the roots of her hair.

“Canalis!” exclaimed the dwarf, who learnt from Modeste’s tone and blush all of her secret that he as yet knew not. “He, the great poet, does he write ballads?”

“They are some simple lines,” replied she, “to which I have ventured to adapt some reminiscences of German airs.”

"No, no, my child," said Madame Mignon; "that music is your own, my dear!"

Modeste, feeling herself grow hotter and hotter, went out into the garden, taking Butscha with her.

"You can do me a great service," said she, in an undertone. "Dumay is affecting discretion to my mother and me as to the amount of the fortune my father is bringing home, and I want to know the truth. Has not Dumay, at different times, sent papa five hundred and something thousand francs? My father is not the man to stay abroad four years simply to double his capital. Now a ship is coming in that is all his own, and the share he offers Dumay amounts to nearly six hundred thousand francs."

"We need not question Dumay," said Butscha. "Your father had lost, as you know, four millions of francs before his departure, these he has no doubt recovered; he would certainly have given Dumay ten per cent. of his profits; so, from the fortune the worthy Breton confesses to, my chief and I calculate that the Colonel's must amount to six or seven millions——"

"Oh, father!" cried Modeste, crossing her arms, and raising her eyes to heaven, "you have given me a second life!"

"Oh, Mademoiselle, you love a poet! A man of that stamp is more or less of a Narcissus. Will he love you as he ought? A craftsman in words, always absorbed in fitting sentences together, is very fatiguing. A poet, Mademoiselle, is not poetry—no more than the seed is the flower."

"Butscha, I never saw such a handsome man!"

"Beauty, Mademoiselle, is a veil which often serves to hide many imperfections."

"He has the most angelic heart that heaven——"

"God grant you may be right," said the dwarf, clasping his hands. "May you be happy! That man, like yourself, will have a slave in Jean Butscha. I shall then no longer be a notary; I shall give myself up to study—to science——"

"And why?"

"Well, Mademoiselle, to bring up your children, if you will condescend to allow me to be their tutor. . . . Oh! if you would accept a piece of advice! Look here, let me

go to work my own way. I could ferret out this man's life and habits, could discover if he is kind, if he is violent or gentle, if he will show you the respect you deserve, if he is capable of loving you perfectly, preferring you to all else, even to his own talent——"

"What can it matter if I love him?" said she simply.

"To be sure, that is true," cried the hunchback.

At this moment Madame Mignon was saying to her friends—

"My daughter has this day seen the man she loves."

"Can it be that sulphur-colored waistcoat that puzzled you so much, Latournelle?" cried the notary's wife. "That young man had a pretty white rosebud in his buttonhole——"

"Ah!" said the mother, "a token to be known by!"

"He wore the rosette of the Legion of Honor," Madame Latournelle went on. "He is a charming youth! But we are all wrong; Modeste never raised her veil, she was huddled up like a pauper, and——"

"And she said she was ill," added the notary. "But she has thrown off her mufflers, and is perfectly well now!"

"It is incomprehensible!" said Dumay.

"Alas! it is as clear as day," said the notary.

"My child," said Madame Mignon to Modeste, who came in, followed by Butscha, "did you happen to see in church this morning a well-dressed little man with a white rose in his buttonhole, and the rosette——"

"I saw him," Butscha hastily put in, seeing by the attention of the whole party what a trap Modeste might fall into. "It was Grindot, the famous architect, with whom the town is treating for the restoration of the church. He came from Paris, and I found him this morning examining the outside as I set out for Sainte-Adresse."

"Oh! he is an architect! He puzzled me greatly," said Modeste, to whom Butscha had secured time to recover herself.

Dumay looked askance at Butscha. Modeste, put on her guard, assumed an impenetrable demeanor. Dumay's suspicions were excited to the highest pitch, and he resolved to go next day to the Mairie and ascertain whether the expected architect had in fact been at le Havre. Butscha,

on his part, very uneasy as to Modeste's ultimate fate, decided on starting for Paris to set a watch over Canalis.

Gobenheim arrived in time to play a rubber, and his presence repressed the ferment of feeling. Modeste awaited her mother's bedtime almost with impatience; she wanted to write, and this is the letter her love dictated to her when she thought that everyone was asleep.

XIII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"Oh, my best-beloved friend, what vile libels are your portraits displayed in the print-sellers' windows! And I who was happy with that detestable lithograph! I am quite shy of loving such a handsome man. No, I cannot conceive that Paris women can be so stupid as not to see, one and all, that you are the fulfilment of their dreams. You neglected! You loveless!—I do not believe a word you have said about your obscure and laborious life, your devotion to an idol till now vainly sought for. You have been too well loved, Monsieur; your brow, as pale and smooth as a magnolia petal, plainly shows it, and I shall be wretched.

"What am I now?—Ah! why have you called me forth to life! In one instant I felt that I had shed my ponderous chrysalis! My soul burst the crystal which held it captive; it rushed through my veins. In short, the cold silence of things suddenly ceased to me; everything in nature spoke to me. The old church to me was luminous; its vaults, glittering with gold and azure, like that of an Italian church, sparkled above my head. The melodious strains, sung by angels to martyrs to make them forget their anguish, sounded through the organ! The hideous pavement of le Havre seemed like a flowery path. I recognized the sea as an old friend, whose language, full of sympathy, I had never known well enough. I saw how the roses in my garden and greenhouse had long worshiped me, and whispered to me to love! They all smiled on me on my return from church; and, to crown all, I heard your name of Melchior murmured by the flower-bells; I saw it written on the clouds! Yes, I am indeed

alive, thanks to you—poet more beautiful than that cold and prim Lord Byron, whose face is as dull as the English climate. Wedded to you by one only of your Oriental glances which pierced my black veil, you transfused your blood into my veins, and it fired me from head to foot. Ah, we do not feel life like that when our mothers bring us into the world! A blow dealt to you would fall on me at the same instant, and my existence henceforth can only be accounted for by your mind. I know now the purpose of the divine harmony of music; it was invented by the angels to express love.

“To be a genius and handsome too, my Melchior, is too much. A man should have a choice at his birth. But when I think of the treasures of tenderness and affection you have lavished on me, especially during this last month, I wonder whether I am dreaming! Nay, you must be hiding some mystery. What woman could give you up without dying of it? Yes, jealousy has entered my heart with such love as I could not believe in! Could I imagine such a conflagration?

“A new and inconceivable vagary! I now wish you were ugly! What follies I committed when I got home! Every yellow dahlia reminded me of your pretty waistcoat, every white rose was a friend, and I greeted them with a look which was yours, as I am wholly! The color of the gentleman’s well-fitting gloves—everything, to the sound of his step on the flagstones—everything is so exactly represented by my memory that, sixty years hence, I shall still see the smallest details of this high day, the particular color of the atmosphere, and the gleam of the sunbeam reflected from a pillar; I shall hear the prayer which your advent broke into; I shall breathe the incense from the altar; and I shall fancy that I feel above our heads the hands of the priest who was giving us the final benediction just as you went past. That good Abbé Marcellin has married us already. The superhuman joy of experiencing this world of new and unexpected emotions can only be equaled by the joy I feel in telling you of them, in rendering up all my happiness to him who pours it into my soul with the unstinting bounty

of the sun. So no more veils, my beloved! Come, oh, come back soon! I will unmask with joy.

“You have, no doubt, heard of the firm of Mignon of le Havre? Well, in consequence of an irreparable loss, I am the sole heiress of the family. Do not scorn us, you who are descended from one of the heroes of Auvergne. The arms of Mignon de la Bastie will not dishonor those of Canalis. They are *gules, a bend sable charged with three besants, in each quarter a patriarchal cross or*, surmounted by a cardinal’s hat, and the cord and tassels as mantling. My dear, I will be faithful to our motto, *Una fides, unus Dominus!* The true faith, and one Lord.

“Perhaps, my friend, you will think there is some irony in my name after all I have here confessed. It is Modeste. Thus, I did not altogether cheat you in signing ‘O. d’Este-M.’ Nor did I deceive you in speaking of my fortune; it will, I believe, amount to the sum which has made you so virtuous. And I know so surely that to you money is so unimportant a consideration, that I can write of it unaffectedly. At the same time, you must let me tell you how glad I am to be able to endow our happiness with the freedom of action and movement that wealth gives, the power of saying, ‘Let us go——’ when the fancy takes us to see a foreign land, of flying off in a comfortable carriage, seated side by side, without a care about money; and happy, too, to give you the right of saying to the King, ‘I have such a fortune as you require in your peers!’

“In this, Modeste Mignon can be of some service to you, and her money will find noble uses. As to your humble servant, you have seen her once, at her window in a wrapper.—Yes, the fair-haired daughter of Eve was your unknown correspondent; but how little does the Modeste of to-day resemble her whom you then saw! She was wrapped in a shroud, and this other—have I not told you so?—has derived from you the life of life. Pure and permitted love, a love that my father, now at last returning from his travels and with riches, will sanction, has uplifted me with its childlike but powerful hand from the depths of the tomb where I was sleeping. You awoke me as the sun awakes the flowers.

The glance of her you love is not now that of the bold-faced little Modeste! Oh, no; it is bashful, it has glimpses of happiness, and veils itself under chaste eyelids. My fear now is that I cannot deserve my lot. The King has appeared in his glory; my liege has now a mere vassal, who implores his forgiveness for taking such liberties, as the thimble-rigger with loaded dice did after cheating the Chevalier de Grammont.

"Yes, beloved poet, I will be your 'Mignon,' but a happier Mignon than Goethe's, for you will leave me to dwell in my native land, won't you?—in your heart.

"As I write this bridal wish, a nightingale in the Vilquins' park has just answered for you. Oh! let me quickly hear that the nightingale, with his long-drawn note, so pure, so clear, so full, inundating my heart with love and gladness, like an Annunciation, has not lied.

"My father will pass through Paris, on his way from Marseilles. The house of Mongenod, his correspondents, will know his address; go to see him, my dearest Melchior, tell him that you love me, and do not try to tell him how much I love you; let that be a secret always between us and God! I, dear adored one, will tell my mother everything. She, a daughter of Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild, will justify me by her caresses; she will be made happy by our secret and romantic poem, at once human and divine! You have the daughter's pledge; now obtain the consent of the Comte de la Bastie, the father of your own

MODESTE.

"*P. S.*—Above all, do not come to le Havre without having obtained my father's permission; and, if you love me, you will be able to discover him on his way through Paris."

"What are you doing at this time of night, Mademoiselle Modeste?" asked Dumay.

"I am writing to my father," she replied to the old soldier. "Did you not tell me that you were starting to-morrow?"

Dumay had no answer to this, and went to bed, while Modeste wrote a long letter to her father.

Next day Françoise Cochet, alarmed at seeing the Havre postmark, came up to the Chalet to deliver to her young mistress the following letter, and carry away that which Modeste had written.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"My heart warns me that you were the woman, so carefully veiled and disguised, placed between Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, who have but one child, a son. Ah, dearly loved one! if you are of humble rank, devoid of position, distinction, or even fortune, you cannot imagine what my joy would be. You must know me by this time; why not tell me the whole truth? I am no poet excepting through love in my heart, and for you. Oh, what immense affection I must have to stay here, in this Hôtel de Normandie, and not walk up to Ingouville, that I can see from my windows? Will you love me as I love you? To have to leave le Havre for Paris in such uncertainty! Is not that being punished for loving as if I had committed a crime?—I have obeyed you blindly.

"Ah! let me soon have a letter; for, if you are mysterious, I have returned mystery for mystery, and I must at last throw off the mask of my incognito, and tell you how little I am a poet, abdicating the glory you have lent me."

This letter greatly disturbed Modeste; she could not withdraw her own, which Françoise had already posted by the time she read the last lines once more, puzzled as to their meaning; but she went up to her room, and wrote an answer, asking for explanations.

During these little incidents, others, equally small, were happening in the town, and were destined to make Modeste forget her uneasiness. Dumay, having gone early to le Havre, at once knew that no architect had arrived there the night before last. Furious at the lie told him by Butscha, which revealed a complicity which he would know the meaning of, he hurried from the Mairie to the Latournelles.

"Where is your Master Butscha?" asked he of his friend the notary, on not finding the clerk in the office.

"Butscha, my dear fellow? He is on the road to Paris, whisked away by the steamboat. Early this morning, on the quay, he met a sailor, who told him that his father, the Swedish sailor, has come into some money. Butscha's father went to India, it would seem, and served some prince, a Mahratta, and he is now in Paris——"

"A pack of lies! Shameful! Monstrous! Oh, I will find that damned hunchback; I am going to Paris, and on purpose for that!" cried Dumay. "Butscha is deceiving us! He knows something about Modeste, and has never told us. If he dares meddle in the matter—— He shall never be a notary; I will cast him back on his mother, in the mire, in the——"

"Come, my friend, never hang a man without trying him," replied Latournelle, terrified at Dumay's exasperation.

After explaining on what his suspicions were founded, Dumay begged Madame Latournelle to stay at the Chalet with Modeste during his absence.

"You will find the Colonel in Paris," said the notary. "In the shipping news this morning, in the *Commerce* newspaper, under the heading of Marseilles.—Here, look!" he said, handing him the sheet, "'The *Bettina-Mignon*, Captain Mignon, arrived October 16th,' and to-day is the 17th. At this moment all le Havre knows of the master's return."

Dumay requested Gobenheim to dispense henceforth with his services; he then returned at once to the Chalet, going in at the moment when Modeste had just closed her letters to her father and to Canalis. The two letters were exactly alike in shape and thickness, differing only in the address. Modeste thought she had laid that to her father over that to her Melchior, and had done just the reverse. This mistake, so common in the trifles of life, led to the discovery of her secret by her mother and Dumay.

The Lieutenant was talking eagerly to Madame Mignon in the drawing-room, confiding to her the fresh fears to which Modeste's duplicity and Butscha's connivance had given rise.

"I tell you, Madame," he exclaimed, "he is a viper we have warmed on our hearth; there is not room for a soul in these fag-ends of humanity."

Modeste had slipped the letter to her father into her pocket, fancying that it was the letter to her lover, and went down with that addressed to Canalis in her hand, hearing Dumay speak of starting immediately for Paris.

"What is wrong with my poor Mysterious Dwarf, and why are you talking so loud?" said she at the door of the drawing-room.

"Butscha, Mademoiselle, set out for Paris this morning, and you, no doubt, can say why!—It must be to carry on some intrigue with the so-called little architect in a sulphur-colored waistcoat, who, unluckily for the hunchback's falsehood, has not yet been to le Havre."

Modeste was startled; she guessed that the dwarf had gone off to make his own inquiries as to the poet's manners and customs; she turned pale, and sat down.

"I will be after him; I will find him!" said Dumay. "That, no doubt, is the letter for your father?" he added, holding out his hand. "I will send it to Mongenod's—if only my Colonel and I do not cross on the way."

Modeste gave him the letter. Little Dumay, who could read without spectacles, mechanically read the address—

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, Rue de Paradis-Poisonnière, No. 29!" he exclaimed. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Ah! my child, then he is the man you love!" cried Madame Mignon. "The verses you set to music are by him——"

"And it is his portrait that you have upstairs in a frame!" added Dumay.

"Give me back that letter, Monsieur Dumay," said Modeste, drawing herself up, like a lioness defending her cubs.

"Here it is, Mademoiselle," he replied. Modeste slipped the letter into her bosom, and held out to Dumay that addressed to her father.

"I know you to be capable of anything, Dumay," said she; "but if you move a single step towards Monsieur de Canalis, I will take one out of this house, and never come back!"

"You will kill your mother!" replied Dumay, who went to call his wife.

The poor mother had fainted away, stricken to the heart by Modeste's threatening speech.

"Good-by, wife," said the Breton, embracing the little American. "Save the mother; I am going to save the daughter."

He left Modeste and Madame Dumay with Madame Mignon, made his preparations in a few minutes, and went down to le Havre. An hour later he set off by post with the swiftness which passion or interest alone can give to the wheels.

Madame Mignon soon revived under her daughter's care, and went up to her room, leaning on Modeste's arm; the only reproach she uttered when they were alone was to say, "Unhappy child! what have you done? Why hide anything from me? Am I so stern?"

"Why, of course, I was going to tell you everything," replied the girl in tears.

She told her mother the whole story; she read her all the letters and replies; she plucked the rose of her poem to pieces, petal by petal, to lay in the heart of the kind German lady; this took up half the day. When her confession was ended, and she saw something like a smile on the lips of the too indulgent blind woman, she threw herself into her arms with tears.

"Oh, mother!" cried she, in the midst of her sobs, "you whose heart is of gold, and all poetry, and like some choice vessel molded by God to contain the one pure and heavenly love that can fill a whole life!—you whom I long to imitate by loving nothing on earth but my husband—you must know how bitter are these tears which I shed at this moment, which fall wet on your hands.—The butterfly with iridescent wings, that beautiful second soul which your daughter has cherished with maternal care—my love, my sacred love, that inspired and living mystery, has fallen into vulgar hands that will tear its wings and its veil under the cruel pretext of enlightening me, of inquiring whether genius is as correct as a banker, if my Melchior is capable of amassing dividends, if he has

some love affair to be unearthed, if he is not guilty in vulgar eyes of some youthful episode, which to our love is what a cloud is to the sun. What are they going to do?—Here, feel my hand; I am in a fever! They will kill me!”

Modeste, seized by a deadly shivering fit, was obliged to go to bed, alarming her mother, Madame Latournelle, and Madame Dumay, who nursed her while the Lieutenant was traveling to Paris, whither the logic of events transfers our tale for the moment.

Men who are truly modest, like Ernest de la Brière, and especially those who, though knowing their own value, are neither loved nor appreciated, will understand the infinite rapture in which the young secretary reveled as he read Modeste's letter. After discovering the wit and greatness of his mind, his young and guileless but wily mistress thought him handsome. This is the supremest flattery. Why! Because beauty is no doubt the Master's signature on the work into which He has infused His soul; it is the divinity made manifest; and to see it where it does not exist, to create it by the power of an enchanted eye, is—is it not?—the crowning magic of love.

And the poor young fellow could exclaim to himself with the ecstasy of an applauded author—

“At last I am loved!”

When once a woman, a courtesan, or an innocent girl has let the words escape her, “How handsome you are!” even if it be untrue, if the man allows the subtle poison of the words to enter his brain, he is thenceforth tied by eternal bonds to the bewitching liar, to the truthful or deluded woman; she is his world; he thirsts for this testimony; he would never weary of it, not even if he were a prince.

Ernest proudly paced his room; he stood in front of the mirror—three-quarter face, in profile; he tried to criticise his own features, but a diabolical, insinuating voice said to him, “Modeste is right!” and he came back to the letter and read it again. He saw the heavenly fair one, he talked to her! Then, in the midst of his rapture, came the overwhelming

thought, "She believes me to be Canalis, and she is a millionaire!"

All his happiness fell with a crash, as a man falls when, walking in his sleep, he has reached the ridge of a roof, and hearing a voice, steps forward, and is dashed to pieces on the stones.

"But for the halo of glory, I should be ugly!" cried he. "What a horrible predicament I have got myself into!"

La Brière was too thoroughly the man of his letters, too entirely the pure and noble soul he had shown in them, to hesitate at the voice of honor. He at once resolved to go and confess everything to Modeste's father if he were in Paris, and to inform Canalis fully of the outcome of their very Parisian practical joke. To this sensitive young fellow the vastness of Modeste's fortune was a casting reason. Above all, he would not be suspected of having used the stimulation of this correspondence, though on his side so perfectly sincere, for filching a fortune. Tears stood in his eyes as he walked from his rooms in the Rue Chantierine to Mongenod the banker's whose prosperity, connections, and prospects were partly the work of the Minister to whom he himself was indebted.

At the time when La Brière was closeted with the head of the house of Mongenod, and acquiring all the information he needed in his strange position, such a scene was taking place in Canalis' house as Dumay's hasty departure might have led us to expect.

Dumay, like a true soldier of the Imperial School, whose blood had been boiling all through his journey, conceived of a poet as an irresponsible fellow, a man who fooled in rhyme, living in a garret, dressed in black cloth white at all the seams, whose boots sometimes had soles, whose linen was anonymous, who always looked as if he had just dropped from the clouds, when he was not scribbling as intently as Butscha. But the ferment that muttered in his brain and heart received a sort of cold shower-bath when he reached the poet's handsome residence, saw a man cleaning a carriage in the courtyard, found himself in a splendid dining-room with another servant dressed like a banker, to whom the groom had referred

him, and who looked him from head to foot as he said that Monsieur le Baron could not see anyone.

"Monsieur le Baron has a meeting to-day," he added, "at the Council of State."

"I am right?" asked Dumay; "this is the house of Monsieur de Canalis, who writes poetry?"

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis," said the footman, "is no doubt the great poet you mean, but is also Master of Appeals to the State Council, and attached to the Foreign Office."

Dumay, who had come to box a rhymester's ears, to use his own contemptuous expression, had found a State functionary. The drawing-room where he was kept waiting, remarkable for its magnificence, presented to his contemplation the row of crosses that glittered on Canalis' evening coat, left by the servant over the back of a chair. Presently he was attracted by the sheen and workmanship of a silver gilt cup, and the words, "The gift of MADAME," struck his eye. Opposite this, on a bracket, was a Sèvres vase, over which was engraved, "Given by Madame la Dauphine." These silent warnings restored Dumay to his common sense, while the man-servant was asking his master whether he could receive a stranger, who had come from le Havre on purpose to see him—his name Dumay.

"What is he like?" asked Canalis.

"Has a good hat, and the red ribbon."

At a nod of assent, the man went out, and returned announcing—

"Monsieur Dumay."

When he heard his own name, when he stood before Canalis in a study as costly as it was elegant, his feet on a carpet quite as good as the best in the Mignons' old house, when he met the glance prepared by the poet, who was playing with the tassels of a sumptuous dressing-gown, Dumay was so absolutely dumfounded that he left the great man to speak first.

"To what, Monsieur, do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"Monsieur," Dumay began, still standing.

"If you have much to say, pray be seated," said Canalis, interrupting him; and the poet sank back into his large easy-

chair, and crossed his legs, raising the upper one to rock his foot on a level with his eye, while staring hard at Dumay, who, to use his own soldier's phrase, felt like a dummy.

"I am listening, Monsieur," said the poet. "My time is precious; I am due at the office——"

"Monsieur," said Dumay, "I will be brief. You have bewitched—how I know not—a young lady at le Havre—handsome, rich, the last and only hope of two noble families, and I have come to ask you your intentions."

Canalis, who for the last three months had been absorbed by serious matters, who aimed at promotion to the grade of Commander of the Legion of Honor, and to be Minister to a German Court, had totally forgotten the letter from le Havre.

"I?" cried he.

"You," replied Dumay.

"Monsieur," said Canalis, smiling, "I know no more what you mean than if you were talking Hebrew. I bewitch a young girl?—I, who——?" A lordly smile curled the poet's lip. "Come, Monsieur. I am not a boy that I should amuse myself by stealing poor wild fruit when I have ample orchards open to me, where the finest peaches in the world ripen. All Paris knows where my affections are placed. That there should be at le Havre a young lady suffering from some admiration, of which I am wholly unworthy, for the verses I have written, my dear sir, would not astonish me! Nothing is commoner. Look there! You see that handsome ebony box inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and fitted with iron wrought as fine as lace. That coffer belonged to Pope Leo X.; it was given to me by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who had it from the King of Spain.—I have devoted it to the preservation of all the letters I receive from every part of Europe, written by unknown women and girls. Oh! I have the greatest respect for those posies of flowers culled from the very soul, and sent to me in a moment of enthusiasm that is indeed worthy of all respect. Yes, to me the impulse of a heart is a noble and beautiful thing!—Others, mocking spirits, screw up such notes to light their cigars, or give them to their wives for curl-papers; I—who am a bachelor, Monsieur—have too much delicate feeling not to treasure these artless and disinterested

offerings in a kind of tabernacle; indeed, I hoard them with no little reverence, and when I am dying I will see them burnt under my eyes. So much the worse for those who think me ridiculous! What is to be said? I am grateful by nature, and these testimonials help me to endure the criticisms and annoyances of a literary life. When I receive in my spine the broadside of an enemy in ambush behind a newspaper, I look at that chest and say to myself, "There are, here and there, a few souls whose wounds have been healed, or beguiled or stanchd by me——"

This rhodomontade, pronounced with the cleverness of a great actor, petrified the little cashier, whose eyes dilated while his astonishment amused the great poet.

"To you," the peacock went on, still spreading his tail, "out of respect for a position I can sympathize with, I can but propose that you should open that treasury, and look there for your young lady; but I never forget names. I know what I am saying, and you are mistaken . . ."

"And this is what happens to a poor girl in this gulf called Paris!" cried Dumay. "The idol of her parents, the delight of her friends, the hope, the darling of them all; the pride of her family, for whom six persons have made a rampart against disaster of their hearts and their fortunes!"

Dumay paused, and then went on—

"Well, Monsieur, you are a great poet, and I am but a poor soldier. For fifteen years, while I served my country in the ranks, I felt the wind of many a bullet in my face, I crossed Siberia, where I was kept a prisoner, the Russians flung me on a truck like a bale of goods, I have endured everything; I have seen no end of my comrades die—— And you, Monsieur, have sent such a chill through my bones as I never felt before!"

Dumay believed that he had touched the poet; he had flattered him—an almost impossible achievement, for the ambitious man had by this time forgotten the first phial of precious balm that Praise had broken on his head.

"You see, my brave friend," said the poet solemnly, as he laid his hand on Dumay's shoulder, feeling it a strange thing that he should be able to make a soldier of the Empire shiver,

"this girl is everything to you—— But to society, what is she? Nothing. If at this moment the most important mandarin in China is closing his eyes and putting the Empire into mourning, does that grieve you deeply? In India the English are killing thousands of men as good as we are; and at this moment, as I speak, the most charming woman is there being burnt—but you have had coffee for breakfast all the same? Indeed, at this minute, here in Paris, you may find several mothers of families lying on straw and bringing a child into the world without a rag to wrap it in!—And here is some delicious tea in a cup that cost five louis, and I am writing verses to make the ladies of Paris exclaim, '*Charming, charming! divine, exquisite! it goes to the heart!*'"

"Social nature, like Mother Nature herself, is great at forgetting. Ten years hence you will be amazed at the step you have taken. You are in a city where we die, and marry, and worship each other at an assignation; where a girl suffocates herself, while a man of genius and his cargo of ideas full of humanitarian benefits go to the bottom, side by side, often under the same roof, and knowing nothing of each other.—And you come and expect us to swoon with anguish at this commonplace question, 'Is a certain young person at le Havre this or that, or is she not?'—Oh, you really are——"

"And you call yourself a poet!" cried Dumay. "But do you really feel nothing of what you depict?"

"If we felt all the misery or joy that we describe, we should be worn out in a few months, like old shoes," said the poet, smiling. "Listen, you shall not have come from le Havre to Paris, and to me, Canalis, without having anything to take back with you. Soldier!"—and Canalis had the figure and gesture of an Homeric hero—"learn this from the poet, 'Every noble feeling in each of us is a poem so essentially individual that our best friend, our self, takes no interest in it. It is a treasure belonging to each alone——'"

"Forgive me for interrupting you," said Dumay, who gazed at Canalis with horror, "but have you been to le Havre?"

"I spent a night and day there in the spring of 1824 on my way to London."

"You are a man of honor," Dumay went on. "Can you give me your word of honor that you do not know Made-moiselle Modeste Mignon?"

"This it the first time I ever heard her name," replied Canalis.

"Oh, Monsieur," cried Dumay, "into what dark intrigue am I about to plunge? May I count on you to help me in my inquiries? For someone, I am certain, has been making use of your name. You ought to have received a letter yesterday from le Havre."

"I have received nothing! You may be sure, Monsieur, that I will do all that lies in my power to be of service to you."

Dumay took leave, his heart full of anxiety, believing that hideous little Butscha had hidden himself in the semblance of the great poet to captivate Modeste; while Butscha, on the contrary, as keen and clever as a prince who avenges himself, sharper than a spy, was making inquisition into the poet's life and actions, escaping detection by his insignificance like an insect working its way into the young wood of a tree.

The Breton had but just left when La Brière came into his friend's room. Canalis naturally mentioned the visit of this man from le Havre.

"Hah!" said Ernest, "Modeste Mignon! I have come on pupose about that affair."

"Bless me!" cried Canalis, "do you mean to say I have made a conquest by proxy?"

"Why, yes, that is the turning-point of the drama. My friend, I am loved by the sweetest girl in the world, beautiful enough to shine among the beauties of Paris, with a heart and education worthy of Clarissa Harlowe; she has seen me, she likes my looks—and she believes me to be the great poet Canalis.

"Nor is this all: Modeste Mignon is of good birth, and Mongenod has just told me that her father, the Comte de la Bastie, must have a fortune of something like six millions of francs. This father has come home within three days, and I have just begged him to arrange an interview with me, at two o'clock—through Mongenod, who in his note mentioned that it concerned his daughter's happiness.—You will understand

that before meeting the father I was bound to tell you everything."

"Among all the blossoms that open to the sunshine of fame," said Canalis with emphasis, "there is one glorious plant which, like the orange, bears its golden fruit amid the thousand united perfumes of wit and beauty! one elegant shrub, one true passion, one perfect happiness—and it has evaded me!" Canalis kept his eyes on the carpet that Ernest might not read them. "How," he went on after a pause, to recover his presence of mind, "how is it possible, among the intoxicating scents of these fancy-paper notes, and these phrases that mount to the brain, to detect the genuine heart—the girl, the woman, in whom true love is hidden under the livery of flattery, who loves us for ourselves, and who offers us happiness? No one could do it but an angel or a demon, and I am only an ambitious Master of Appeals!

"Ah, my dear fellow, fame transforms us into a butt, a target for a thousand arrows. One of us owed his marriage to a copy of hydraulic verses; and I, even more ingratiating, more the ladies' man than he, shall have missed my chance—for you love this poor girl?" said he, looking at La Brière.

"Oh!" cried La Brière.

"Well, then, be happy, Ernest," said the poet, taking his friend's arm and leaning on it. "As it turns out, I shall not have been ungrateful to you! You are handsomely rewarded for your devotion, for I will be generously helpful to your happiness."

Canalis was furious, but he could not behave otherwise, so he took the benefit of his ill-luck by using it as a pedestal. A tear rose to the young secretary's eye; he threw his arms round Canalis and embraced him.

"Oh, Canalis, I did not half know you!"

"What did you expect? It takes time to travel round the world," replied the poet with emphatic irony.

"Consider," said La Brière, "that immense fortune?——"

"Well, my friend, will it not be in good hands?" cried Canalis, pointing his effusiveness by a charming gesture.

"Melchior," said La Brière, "I am yours in life and death."

He wrung the poet's hands, and went away hastily ; he was eager to see Monsieur Mignon.

At this hour the Comte de la Bastie was suffering all the sorrows that had been lurking for him as their prey. He had learnt from his daughter's letter the facts of Bettina-Caroline's death and her mother's blindness ; and Dumay had just told him the story of the terrible imbroglio of Modeste's love affair.

"Leave me to myself," he said to his faithful friend.

When the Lieutenant had closed the door, the unhappy father threw himself on a couch and lay there, his head in his hands, shedding the few thin tears that lie under the eyelids of a man of fifty-six without falling, wetting them, but drying quickly and rising again, the last dews of the autumn of human life.

"To have children you love and a wife you adore, is to have many hearts and offer them all to the dagger!" cried he, starting to his feet with a furious bound, and pacing the room. "To be a father is to give one's self over to misfortune, bound hand and foot. If I meet that fellow d'Estourmy I will kill him. Daughters! Who would have daughters? One gets hold of a scoundrel ; and the other, my Modeste, of what? A coward, who deludes her under the gilt-paper armor of a poet. If only it were Canalis! There would be no great harm done. But this Scapin of a lover!—I will throttle him with my own hands!" said he to himself, with an involuntary gesture of energetic atrocity. "And what then," he thought, "if my child should die of grief?"

Mechanically he looked out of the window of the Hôtel des Princes, and came back to sit down on the divan, where he remained motionless. The fatigue of six voyages to the Indies, the anxieties of investments, the dangers he had met and escaped, care and sorrow had silvered Charles Mignon's hair. His fine military face, clean in outline, was bronzed by the sun of Malaysia, China, and Asia Minor, and had assumed an imposing expression, which grief at this moment made sublime.

“And Mongenod tells me I can perfectly trust the young man who is to come to speak to me about my daughter!——”

Ernest de la Brière was just then announced by one of the servants whom the Comte de la Bastie had attached to him in the course of these four years, and had picked out from the crowd of men under him.

“You come, Monsieur, with an introduction from my friend Mongenod?” said he.

“Yes,” replied Ernest, gazing timidly at a face as gloomy as Othello’s. “My name is Ernest de la Brière, connected, Monsieur, with the family of the late Prime Minister; I was his private secretary when he was in office. At his fall, His Excellency was good enough to place me in the Court of Exchequer, where I am now first-class Referendary, and where I may rise to be a Master——”

“And what has all this to do with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?” asked Charles Mignon.

“Monsieur, I love her, and it is my unhopèd-for happiness to be loved by her. . . . Listen, Monsieur,” said Ernest, interrupting a terrible movement on the part of the angry father, “I have the strangest confession to make to you, the most ignominious for a man of honor. And the worst punishment of my conduct, which perhaps was natural, is not this revelation to you—I dread the daughter even more than the father.”

Ernest then told the prologue of this domestic drama, quite simply, and with the dignity of sincerity; he did not omit the twenty and odd letters they had exchanged—he had brought them with him—nor the interview he had just had with Canalis. When the father had read all these letters, the poor lover, pale and suppliant, quaked before the fiery looks of the Provençal.

“Well, Monsieur,” said Mignon, “in all this there is only one mistake, but it is all-important. My daughter has not six millions of francs; her fortune at most is two hundred thousand francs in settlement, and very doubtful expectations.”

“Oh, Monsieur!” cried Ernest, throwing his arms round Charles Mignon, and hugging him, “you relieve me of a load

that oppressed me. Now, perhaps, nothing will come in the way of my happiness!—I have interest; I shall soon be Master of the Exchequer. If she had but ten thousand francs, if I had to accept nominal settlements, Mademoiselle Mignon would still be the wife of my choice; and to make her happy, as happy as you have made yours, to be a true son to you—yes, Monsieur, for my father is dead—this is the deepest wish of my heart.”

Charles Mignon drew back three steps, and fixed on La Brière a look that sank into the young man’s eyes, as a poniard goes into its sheath; then he stood silent, reading in those fascinated eyes and on that eager countenance the most perfect candor and the purest truthfulness.

“Is fate at last wearied out?” said he to himself in an undertone. “Can I have found a paragon son-in-law in this youth?” He walked up and down the room in great excitement.

“Well, Monsieur,” he said at length, “you owe implicit obedience to the sentence you have come to ask, for otherwise you would at this moment be acting a mere farce.”

“Indeed, Monsieur——”

“Listen to me,” said the father, nailing La Brière to the spot by a look. “I will be neither severe, nor hard, nor unjust. You must take the disadvantages with the advantages of the false position in which you have placed yourself. My daughter imagines that she is in love with one of the great poets of our day, whose fame chiefly has fascinated her. Well, then, ought not I, as her father, to enable her to choose between the celebrity which has seemed a lighthouse to her, and the humble reality thrown to her by chance in the irony it so often allows itself? Must she not be free to choose between you and Canalis? I trust to your honor to be silent as to what I have just told you concerning the state of my affairs. You and your friend, the Baron de Canalis, must come to spend the last fortnight of this month of October at le Havre. My house will be open to you both; my daughter will have the opportunity of knowing you. Remember, you yourself are to bring your rival, and to allow him to believe all the fables that may be current as to the Comte de la Bastie’s

millions. I shall be at le Havre by to-morrow, and shall expect you three days later. Good-morning, Monsieur."

Poor La Brière very slowly made his way back to Canalis. At that moment the poet, face to face with himself, could give himself up to the torrent of reflections that flow from that "second thought" which Talleyrand so highly praised. The first thought is the impulse of nature, the second that of society.

"A girl with six millions of francs! And my eyes failed to discern the glitter of that gold through the darkness! With such a fortune as that, I can be a peer of France, count, ambassador!—I have answered the most ordinary women, simpletons, intriguing girls who only wanted an autograph! And I rebelled against these *bal masqué* wiles on the very day when heaven sent me a chosen soul, an angel with wings of gold!—Pooh! I will write a sublime poem, and the chance will come again! What luck for that little La Brière, who spread his tail in my sunbeams!—And what plagiary. I am the model, and he is to be the statue! This is playing the fable of 'Bertrand and Raton.'—Six millions, and an angel, a Mignon de la Bastie! An aristocratic angel, who loves poetry and the poet!—And I meanwhile display my muscles as a strong man, perform athletics, like Alcides, to astonish this champion of physical strength by moral force—this brave soldier full of fine feeling, this young girl's friend, who will tell her I have a soul of iron. I am playing Napoleon, when I ought to show myself as a seraph!—I shall have won a friend perhaps, and have paid dear for him; but friendship is a fine thing. Six millions—that is the price of a friend; a man cannot have many at that figure!"

At this last point of exclamation La Brière came into his friend's room; he was depressed.

"Well, what is the matter?" said Canalis.

"The father insists that his daughter shall be enabled to choose between the two Canalis——"

"Poor boy!" said the poet, laughing. "A clever man is that father!"

"I have pledged my honor to take you to le Havre," said La Brière dolefully.

"My dear boy," said Canalis, "if your honor is at stake, you may depend upon me. I will ask for a month's leave of absence."

"Oh, Modeste is lovely!" cried La Brière in despair, "and you will easily extinguish me! Still, I was amazed to find good fortune coming my way; I said to myself, it is all a mistake!"

"Pooh! We shall see," said Canalis with ruthless cheerfulness.

That evening, after dinner, Charles Mignon and his cashier were flying, at the cost of three francs a stage to the postilion, from Paris to le Havre. The father had completely allayed his watch-dog's alarm as to Modeste's love affairs, had released him from his responsibilities, and reassured him as to Butscha's proceedings.

"Everything is for the best, my good old friend," said Charles, who had made inquiries of Mongenod as to Canalis and La Brière. "We have two players for one part," he added, laughing.

At the same time, he enjoined absolute silence on his old comrade as to the comedy about to be played at the Chalet, and his gentle revenge, or, if you will, the lesson to be given by a father to his child. From Paris to le Havre was one long dialogue between the friends, by which the Colonel learnt the smallest events that had happened in his family during the past four years; and Charles told Dumay that Desplein, the great surgeon, was to come before the end of the month to examine the Countess's eyes, and decide whether it would be possible to remove the cataract and restore her sight.

A few minutes before the breakfast hour at the Chalet, the cracking of a whip, by a postilion counting on a large gratuity, announced the return of the two soldiers. Only the joy of a father coming home to his family after a long absence would give rise to such a detonation, and all the women were standing at the little gate.

There are so many fathers, and so many children—more fathers perhaps than children—who can enter into the excitement of such a meeting, that literature is never required to

depict it; happily! for the finest words, and poetry itself, are inadequate to such emotions. Perhaps, indeed, the sweeter emotions have no literary side.

Not a word was spoken that day that could disturb the happiness of the Mignon family. There was a truce between the father, the mother, and the daughter as to the mysterious love affair which had paled Modeste's cheek. She was up to-day for the first time. The Colonel, with the delicate tenderness that characterizes a true soldier, sat all the time by his wife's side, her hand constantly held in his, and he watched Modeste, never tired of admiring her refined, elegant, and poetic beauty. Is it not by such small things that we know a man of true feeling?

Modeste, fearful of troubling the melancholy happiness of her father and mother, came from time to time to kiss the traveler's brow, and by kissing him so often, seemed to wish to kiss him for two.

"Ah, darling child! I understand you," said her father, pressing Modeste's hand at a moment when she was smothering him with affection.

"Hush!" said Modeste in his ear, pointing to her mother.

Dumay's rather perfidious silence left Modeste very uneasy as to the results of his journey to Paris; she now and then stole a look at the Lieutenant, but could not penetrate that tough skin. The Colonel, as a prudent father, wished to study his only daughter's nature, and, above all, to consult his wife, before proceeding to a discussion on which the happiness of the whole family would depend.

"To-morrow, my dearest child, rise early," said he at night, "and if it is fine, we will go for a walk together on the seashore. We have to talk over your poems, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

These words, spoken with a smile that was reflected on Dumay's lips, were all Modeste could know; still, this was enough to allay her anxiety and to make her too curious to get to sleep till late, so busy was her fancy.

Next morning Modeste was dressed and ready before the Colonel.

"You know everything, my dear father," said she, as soon as they had started on their way to the sea.

"I know everything—and a good many things that you do not know," replied he.

Thereupon the father and daughter walked some few steps in silence.

"Now, tell me, my child, how a daughter so worshiped by her mother could take so decisive a step as to write to a man unknown to her without asking that mother's advice?"

"Well, papa, because mamma would not have allowed it."

"And do you think, my child, that it was right? Though you have inevitably been left to bring yourself up, how is it that your reason or your insight—if modesty failed you—did not tell you that to act in such a way was to throw yourself at a man's head? Can it be that my daughter, my only child, lacks pride and delicacy? Oh! Modeste, you gave your father two hours of hell's torments in Paris; for, in point of fact, your conduct morally has been the same as Bettina's, without having the excuse of seduction; you have been a coquette in cold blood, and that is love without heart, the worst vice of the French woman."

"I—without pride?" said Modeste in tears. "But he has never seen me!"

"*He* knows your name."

"I never let him know it till the moment when our eyes had set the seal to three months of correspondence, during which our souls had spoken to each other!"

"Yes, my dear mistaken angel, you have brought a kind of reason to bear on this madness which has compromised your happiness and your family."

"Well, after all, papa, happiness is the justification of such boldness," said she, with a touch of temper.

"Ah! Then it is merely boldness?" cried her father.

"Such boldness as my mother allowed herself," she answered hastily.

"Refractory child! Your mother, after meeting me at a ball, told her father, who adored her, that same evening, that she believed she could be happy with me.—Now, be candid, Modeste; is there any resemblance between love, at first sight

it is true, but under a father's eye, and the mad act of writing to an unknown man?"

"An unknown man? Nay, papa, one of our greatest poets, whose character and life are under the light of day, exposed to gossip and calumny; a man clothed in glory, to whom, my dear father, I was but a dramatic, literary personage—a girl of Shakespeare's—till the moment when I felt I must know whether the man were as attractive as his soul is beautiful."

"Bless me, my poor child, you are dreaming of poetry in connection with marriage. But if, in all ages, girls have been cloistered in the family; if God and social law have placed them under the stern yoke of paternal sanction, it is precisely and on purpose to spare them the misfortunes to which the poetry that fascinates you must lead while it dazzles you, and which you therefore cannot estimate at its true worth. Poetry is one of the graces of life; it is not the whole of life."

"Papa, it is an action for ever undecided before the tribunal of facts, for there is a constant struggle between our hearts and the family authority."

"Woe to the girl who should find happiness by means of such resistance!" said the Colonel gravely. "In 1813 one of my fellow-officers, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, married his cousin against her father's warnings, and the household paid dearly for the obstinacy that a girl could mistake for love.—In these matters the family is supreme."

"My *fiancé* has told me all that," said she. "He assumed the part of *Orgon* for some time, and had the courage to run down the personal character of poets."

"I have read the correspondence," said her father, with a meaning smile that made Modeste uneasy. "And I may, on that point, remark that your last letter would hardly be allowable in a girl who had been seduced—in a Julie d'Étanges. Good God! what mischief comes of romances!"

"If they were never written, my dear father, we should still enact them. It is better to read them. There are fewer romantic adventures now than in the time of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., when fewer novels were published.—Besides, if you have read our letters, you must have perceived that I

have found you for a son-in-law the most respectful son, the most angelic nature, the strictest honesty, and that we love each other at least as much as you and mamma did. . . . Well, I will admit that the affair has not been conducted exactly as etiquette requires. I made a mistake, if you like——”

“I have read your letters,” repeated her father, interrupting her, “so I know how he justified you in your own eyes for a step which might perhaps be excusable in a woman who knows life, who is carried away by passion, but which in a girl of twenty is a monstrous fault——”

“A fault in common people’s eyes, in those of narrow-minded Gobenhems, who measure out life with a T square! But do not let us go beyond the artistic and poetic world, papa.—We young girls live between two alternatives: we may show a man that we love him by mincing graces, or we may go to meet him frankly. And is not this last method really great and noble? We French girls are disposed of by our family like merchandise, at three months’ date, sometimes much sooner, like Mademoiselle Vilquin; but in England, Switzerland, and Germany they are married more nearly on the system I have adopted. What can you say to that? Am I not half German?”

“Child,” exclaimed the Colonel, looking at his daughter, “the superiority of France lies precisely in the common-sense, the strict logic to which our splendid language compels the mind. France is the Reason of the world! England and Germany are romantic in this point; but even there the great families follow our customs.—You girls would rather not believe, then, that your parents, who know life, have the charge of your souls and your happiness, and that it is their duty to steer you clear of the rocks! . . . Good God!” he went on, “is this their fault or ours? Ought we to bend our children under a yoke of iron? Must we always be punished for the tenderness which prompts us to make them happy, which, unfortunately, makes them heart of our heart!”

As she heard this ejaculation, spoken almost with tears, Modeste cast a side glance at her father.

“Is it wrong in a girl whose heart is free,” said she, “to

choose for her husband a man who is not only charming in himself, but who is also a man of genius, of good birth, and in a fine position—a gentleman as gentle as myself? ”

“Then you love him?” said the Colonel.

“I tell you, father,” said she, laying her head on his breast, “if you do not want to see me die——”

“That is enough,” said the Colonel; “your passion is, I see, unchangeable.”

“Unchangeable.”

“Nothing could move you?”

“Nothing in the world.”

“You can conceive of no alteration, no betrayal,” her father went on. “You love him for better, for worse, for the sake of his personal charm; and if he should be a d’Estourny, you still would love him?”

“Oh, papa, you do not know your child! Could I love a coward, a man devoid of truth and honor—a gallows-bird!”

“Then supposing you have been deceived?”

“By that charming young fellow, so candid—almost melancholy?—You are laughing at me, or you have not seen him.”

“I see; happily your love is not so imperative as you say. I have suggested conditions which might modify your poem.—Well, then you will admit that fathers are of some use?”

“You wanted to give me a lesson, papa—a sort of object-lesson, it would seem.”

“Poor misled girl!” said her father severely; “the lesson is not of my giving; I have nothing to do with it beyond trying to soften the blow.”

“Say no more, papa; do not trifle with my very life,” said Modeste, turning pale.

“Nay, my child, summon up your courage. It is you who have trifled with life, and life now laughs you to scorn.”

Modeste looked at her father in bewilderment.

“Listen; if the young man you love, whom you saw in church at le Havre four days ago, were a contemptible wretch——”

“It is not true!” said she. “That pale, dark face, so noble and full of poetry——”

"Is a lie!" said the Colonel, interrupting her. "He is no more Monsieur de Canalis than I am that fisherman hauling up his sail to go out——"

"Do you know what you are killing in me?" said Modeste.

"Be comforted, my child; though fate has made your fault its own punishment, the mischief is not irreparable. The youth you saw, with whom you have exchanged hearts by correspondence, is an honest fellow; he came to me to confess his dilemma. He loves you, and I should not object to him as a son-in-law."

"And if he is not Canalis, who is he?" asked Modeste, in a broken voice.

"His secretary. His name is Ernest de la Brière. He is not of superior birth, but he is one of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like. And what does it matter to us, after all? You have seen him; nothing can change your feelings; you have chosen him, you know his soul—it is as noble as he is good-looking."

The Comte de la Bastie was checked by a sign from Modeste. The poor child, perfectly white, her eyes fixed on the sea, and as rigid as the dead, had been struck as by a pistol-shot by the words, "*One of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like.*"

"Deceived!" she said at last.

"As your poor sister was, but less seriously."

"Let us go home, papa," she said, rising from the knoll on which they had been sitting. "Listen, father; I swear before God to obey your wishes, whatever they may be, in the business of marriage."

"Then you have already ceased to love?" asked her father sarcastically.

"I loved a true man without a falsehood on his face, as honest as you yourself, incapable of disguising himself like an actor, of dressing himself up in another man's glory."

"You said that nothing could move you!" said the Colonel ironically.

"Oh, do not make game of me!" cried she, clasping her hands, and looking at her father in an agony of entreaty.

"You do not know how you are torturing my heart and my dearest beliefs by your satire——"

"God forbid! I have said the exact truth."

"You are very good, father," she replied, after a pause, with a certain solemnity.

"And he has your letters! Heh?" said Charles Mignon. "If those crazy effusions of your soul had fallen into the hands of one of those poets who, according to Dumay, use them for pipe-lights——"

"Oh, that is going too far."

"So Canalis told him."

"He saw Canalis?"

"Yes," replied the Colonel.

They walked on a little way in silence.

"That, then," said Modeste, when they had gone a few steps, "was why that gentleman spoke so ill of poets and poetry! Why did that little secretary talk of—— But, however," she added, interrupting herself, "were not his virtues, his qualities, his fine sentiments, a mere epistolary make-up? The man who steals another's fame and name may very well——"

"Pick locks, rob the Treasury, murder on the highway," said Charles Mignon, smiling. "That is just like you—you girls, with your uncompromising feelings and your ignorance of life. A man who can deceive a woman has either escaped the scaffold or must end there."

This raillery checked Modeste's effervescence, and again they were both silent.

"My child," the Colonel added, "men in the world—as in nature, for that matter—are bound to try to win your hearts, and you to defend them. You have reversed the position. Is that well? In a false position everything is false. Yours, then, was the first wrong step.—No, a man is not a monster because he tries to attract a woman; our rights allow us to be the aggressors, with all the consequences, short of crime and baseness. A man may still have virtues even after throwing over a woman, for this simply means that he has failed to find the treasure he sought in her; while no woman but a queen, an actress, or a woman so far above the man in rank that to him

she is like a queen, can take the initiative without incurring much blame.—But a girl! She is false to everything that God has given her, every flower of saintliness, dignity, and sweetness, whatever grace, poetry, or precaution she may in-fuse into the act.”

“To seek the master and find the servant! To play the old farce of Love and Chance on one side only!” she exclaimed, with bitter feeling. “Oh, I shall never hold up my head again!”

“Foolish child! Monsieur Ernest de la Brière is, in my eyes, at least the equal of Monsieur de Canalis; he has been private secretary to a Prime Minister, he is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer, he is a man of heart, he adores you,—but he does not write verses.—No, I confess it, he is not a poet; but he may have a heart full of poetry. However, my poor child,” he added, in reply to Modeste’s face of disgust, “you will see them both—the false and the real Canalis——”

“Oh, papa!”

“Did you not swear to obey me in everything that concerns the *business* of your marriage? Well, you may choose between them the man you prefer for your husband. You began with a poem, you may end with a page of bucolics by trying to detect the true nature of these gentlemen in some rustic excursions, a shooting or fishing party.”

Modeste bent her head and returned to the Chalet with her father, listening to what he said, and answering in monosyllables. She had fallen humiliated into the depths of a bog, from the Alp where she fancied she had flown up to an eagle’s nest. To adopt the poetical phraseology of an author of that period, “After feeling the soles of her feet too tender to tread on the glass sherds of reality, Fancy, which had united every characteristic of woman in that fragile form, from the day-dreams of a modest girl, all strewn with violets, to the unbridled desires of a courtesan, had now led her to the midst of her enchanted gardens, where, hideous surprise! instead of an exquisite blossom, she found growing from the soil the hairy and twisted limbs of the Mandragora.”

From the mystic heights of her love, Modeste had dropped on to the dull, flat road, lying between ditches and plowed

lands—the road, in short, that is paved with vulgarity. What girl with an ardent spirit but would be broken by such a fall? At whose feet had she cast her promises?

The Modeste who returned to the Chalet bore no more resemblance to the girl who had gone out two hours before, than the actress in the street resembles the heroine on the stage. She sank into a state of apathy that was painful to behold. The sun was darkened, nature was under a shroud, the flowers had no message for her. Like every girl of a vehement disposition, she drank a little too deep of the cup of disenchantment. She rebelled against reality, without choosing as yet to bend her neck to the yoke of the family and of society; she thought it too heavy, too hard, too oppressive. She would not even listen to the comfort offered by her father and mother, and felt an indescribable savage delight in abandoning herself to her mental sufferings.

“Then poor Butscha was right!” she exclaimed one evening.

This speech shows how far she had traveled in so short a time on the barren plains of Reality, guided by her deep dejection. Grief, when it comes of the upheaval of all our hopes, is an illness; it often ends in death. It would be no mean occupation for modern physiology to investigate the process and means by which a thought can produce the same deadly effects as a poison; how despair can destroy the appetite, injure the pylorus, and change all the functions of the strongest vitality. This was the case with Modeste. In three days she presented an image of morbid melancholy; she sang no more, it was impossible to make her smile; her parents and friends were alarmed. Charles Mignon, uneasy at seeing nothing of the two young men, was thinking of going to fetch them; but on the fourth day Monsieur Latournelle had news of them, and this was how.

Canalis, immensely tempted by such a rich marriage, would neglect no means of outdoing La Brière, while Ernest could not complain of his having violated the laws of friendship. The poet thought that nothing put a lover at a greater disadvantage in a young lady's eyes than figuring in an inferior

position; so he proposed, in the most innocent manner possible, that he and La Brière should keep house together, taking a little country place at Ingouville, where they might live for a month under pretext of recruiting their health.

As soon as La Brière had consented to this proposal, at first regarding it as very natural, Canalis insisted on his being his guest, and made all the arrangements himself. He sent his man-servant to le Havre, desiring him to apply to Monsieur Latournelle for the choice of a country cottage at Ingouville, thinking that the notary would certainly talk over the matter with the Mignon family. Ernest and Canalis, it may be supposed, had discussed every detail of their adventure; and La Brière, always prolix, had given his rival a thousand valuable hints

The servant, understanding his master's intentions, carried them out to admiration; he trumpeted the advent of the great poet, to whom his doctors had ordered some sea-baths to recruit him after the double fatigues of politics and literature. This grand personage required a house of at least so many rooms; for he was bringing his secretary, his cook, two men-servants, and a coachman, not to mention Monsieur Germain Bonnet, his body-servant. The traveling carriage the poet selected and hired for a month was very neat, and could serve for making some excursions; and Germain was in search of two saddle-horses for hire in the neighborhood, as Monsieur le Baron and his secretary were found of horse-exercise. In the presence of little Latournelle, Germain, as he went over various houses, spoke much of the secretary, and rejected two villas on the ground that Monsieur de la Brière would not be well accommodated.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he, "regards his secretary as his best friend. Oh, I should catch it handsomely if Monsieur de la Brière were not as well served as Monsieur le Baron himself. And, after all, Monsieur de la Brière is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer."

Germain was never seen dressed otherwise than in a suit of black, with good gloves and boots, turned out like a gentleman. Imagine the effect he produced, and the notion that was formed of the great poet from this specimen. A clever

man's servant becomes clever too; the master's cleverness presently "runs" and colors the man. Germain did not overact his part; he was straightforward and genial, as Canalis had instructed him to be. Poor La Brière had no suspicion of the injury Germain was doing him, or of the depreciation to which he had exposed himself; for some echoes of public report rose from the lower depths to Modeste's ears. Thus Canalis was bringing his friend in his retinue, in his carriage; and Ernest's simple nature did not allow him to perceive his false position soon enough to remedy it.

The delay which so provoked Charles Mignon was caused by the poet's desire to have his arms painted on the doors of the chaise, and by his orders to the tailor; for Canalis took in the wide world of such trivialities, of which the least may influence a girl.

"Make yourself easy," said Latournelle to the Colonel on the fifth day. "Monsieur de Canalis' man came to a determination this morning. He has taken Madame Amaury's cottage at Sanvic, furnished, for seven hundred francs, and has written to his master that he can start, and will find everything ready on his arrival. So the gentlemen will be here by Sunday. I have also had this note from Butscha. Here—it is not long: 'My dear Master, I cannot get back before Sunday. Between this and then I must get some important information which nearly concerns someone in whom you are interested.'"

The announcement of this arrival did not make Modeste at all less sad; the sense of a fall, of humiliation, still held sway over her, and she was not such a born coquette as her father thought her. There is a charming and permissible kind of flirtation, the coquetry of the soul, which might be called the good breeding of love; and Charles Mignon, when reproving his daughter, had failed to distinguish between the desire to please and the factitious love of the mind, between the craving to love and self-interest. Just like a soldier of the Empire, he saw in the letters he had so hastily read a girl throwing herself at a poet's head; but in many letters—omitted here for the sake of brevity—a connoisseur would have admired the maidenly and graceful reserve which Modeste had

immediately substituted for the aggressive and frivolous pertness of her first effusions—a transition very natural in a woman.

On one point her father had been cruelly right. It was her last letter—in which Modeste, carried away by threefold love, had spoken as though their marriage were a decided thing, which really brought her to shame. Still, she thought her father very hard, very cruel, to compel her to receive a man so unworthy of her, towards whom her soul had flown almost unveiled. She had questioned Dumay as to his interview with the poet; she had ingeniously extracted from him every detail, and she could not think Canalis such a barbarian as the Lieutenant thought him. She could smile at the fine papal chest containing the letters of the *mille et trois* ladies of this literary Don Giovanni. Again and again she was on the point of saying to her father, “I am not the only girl who writes to him; the cream of womankind send leaves for the poet’s crown of bay.”

In the course of this week Modeste’s character underwent a transformation. This catastrophe—and it was a great one to so poetical a nature—aroused her latent acumen and spirit of mischief, and her suitors were to find her a formidable adversary. For, in fact, in any girl, if her heart is chilled, her head grows clear; she then observes everything with a certain swiftness of judgment and a spirit of mockery, such as Shakespeare has admirably painted in the person of Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Modeste was seized by intense disgust of mankind, since the most distinguished of them had deceived her hopes. In love, what a woman mistakes for disgust is simply seeing clearly; but in matters of feeling no woman, especially no young girl, ever sees truly. When she ceases to admire, she contemns. So Modeste, after going through fearful tortures of mind, inevitably put on the armor on which, as she declared, she had stamped the word Contempt; thenceforward she could look on as a disinterested spectator at what she called the Farce of Suitors, although she filled the part of leading lady. More especially was she bent on pertinaciously humiliating Monsieur de la Brière.

“Modeste is saved,” said Madame Mignon to her husband

with a smile. "She means to be revenged on the false Canalis by trying to fall in love with the true one."

This was, indeed, Modeste's plan. It was so obvious that her mother, to whom she confided her vexation, advised her to treat Monsieur de la Brière with oppressive civility.

"These two young fellows," said Madame Latournelle on the Saturday, "have no suspicion of the troops of spies at their heels, for here are eight of us to keep an eye on them."

"What, my dear—two?" cried little Latournelle; "there are three of them!—Gobenheim is not here, yet, so I may speak."

Modeste had looked up, and all the others, following her example, gazed at the notary.

"A third lover, and he is a lover, has put himself on the list——"

"Bless me!" said Charles Mignon.

"But he is no less a person," the notary went on pompously, "than His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, Marquis de Saint-Séver, Duc de Nivron, Comte de Bayeux, Vicomte d'Essigny, High Equerry of France, and Peer of the Realm, Knight of the Orders of the Spur and of the Golden Fleece, Grandee of Spain, and son of the last Governor of Normandy.—He saw Mademoiselle Modeste when he was staying with the Vilquins, and he then only regretted—as his notary told me, who arrived yesterday from Bayeux—that she was not rich enough for him, since his father, on his return from exile, had found nothing left but his Château of Hérouville, graced by his sister's presence.—The young Duke is three-and-thirty. I am definitely charged to make overtures, Monsieur le Comte," added Latournelle, turning respectfully to the Colonel.

"Ask Modeste," said her father, "whether she wishes to have another bird in her aviary; for, so far as I am concerned, I am quite willing that this fine gentleman equerry should pay his addresses to her."

Notwithstanding the care with which Charles Mignon avoided seeing anybody, stayed in the Chalet, and never went

out but with Modeste, Gobenheim, whom they could hardly cease to receive at the Chalet, had gossiped about Dumay's wealth; for Dumay, a second father to Modeste, had said to Gobenheim when he left his service, "I shall be my Colonel's steward, and all my money, excepting what my wife may keep, will go to my little Modeste's children."

So everyone at le Havre had echoed the plain question that Latournelle had asked himself—

"Must not Monsieur Charles Mignon have made an enormous fortune if Dumay's share amounts to six hundred thousand francs, and if Dumay is to be his steward?"

"Monsieur Mignon came home in a ship of his own," said the gossips on 'Change, "loaded with indigo. The freight alone, not to mention the vessel, is worth more than he gives out to be his fortune."

The Colonel would not discharge the servants he had so carefully chosen during his travels, so he was obliged to hire a house for six months in the lower part of Ingouville; he had a body-servant, a cook, and a coachman—both negroes—and a mulatto woman and two mulatto men on whose faithfulness he could rely. The coachman was inquiring for riding horses for Mademoiselle and his master, and for carriage horses for the chaise in which the Colonel and the Lieutenant had come home. This traveling carriage, purchased in Paris, was in the latest fashion, and bore the arms of la Bastie with a Count's coronet. All these things, mere trifles in the eyes of a man who had been living, for four years, in the midst of the unbounded luxury of the Indies, of the Hongkong merchants, and the English at Canton, were the subject of comment to the traders of le Havre and the good folks of Gravelle and Ingouville. Within five days there was a hubbub of talk which flashed across Normandy like a fired train of gunpowder.

"Monsieur Mignon has come home from China with millions," was said at Rouen, "and it would seem that he has become a Count in the course of his travels."

"But he was Comte de la Bastie before the Revolution," somebody remarked.

"So a Liberal, who for five-and-twenty years was known as

Charles Mignon, is now called Monsieur le Comte! What are we coming to?"

Thus, in spite of the reserve of her parents and intimates, Modeste was regarded as the richest heiress in Normandy, and all eyes could now see her merits. The Duc d'Hérouville's aunt and sister, in full drawing-room assembly at Bayeux, confirmed Monsieur Charles Mignon's right to the arms and title of Count conferred on Cardinal Mignon, whose Cardinal's hat and cords were, out of gratitude, assumed in place of a crest and supporters. These ladies had caught sight of Mademoiselle de la Bastie from the Vilquins', and their solicitude for the impoverished head of the house at once scented an opportunity.

"If Mademoiselle de la Bastie is as rich as she is handsome," said the young Duke's aunt, "she will be the best match in the province. And she, at any rate, is of noble birth!"

The last words were a shot at the Vilquins, with whom she could not come to terms after enduring the humiliation of paying them a visit.

Such were the little events which led to the introduction of another actor in this domestic drama, contrary to all the laws of Aristotle and Horace. But the portrait and biography of this personage, so tardy in his appearance, will not detain us long, since he is of the smallest importance. Monsieur le Duc will not fill more space here than he will in history.

His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, the fruit of the matrimonial autumn of the last Governor of Normandy, was born at Vienna in 1796, during the Emigration. The old Marshal, who returned with the King in 1814, died in 1819 without seeing his son married, though he was Duc de Nivron; he had nothing to leave him but the immense Château of Hérouville, with the park, some outlying ground and a farm, all painfully repurchased, and worth about fifteen thousand francs a year. Louis XVIII. gave the young Duke the post of Master of the Horse; and under Charles X. he received the allowance of twelve thousand francs a year granted to impecunious peers.

But what were twenty-seven thousand francs a year for such a family? In Paris, indeed, the young Duke had the use of the Royal carriages, and his official residence at the King's stables in the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre; his salary paid the expenses of the winter, and the twenty-seven thousand francs paid those of the summer in Normandy.

Though this great man was still a bachelor, the fault was less his own than that of his aunt, who was not familiar with La Fontaine's fables. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's pretensions were stupendous, quite out of harmony with the spirit of the age; for great names without money can hardly meet with any wealthy heiresses among the high French nobility, which finds it difficult enough to enrich its sons, ruined by the equal division of property. To find an advantageous match for the young Duc d'Hérouville she should have cultivated the great financial houses, and this haughty daughter of the noble house offended them all by her cutting speeches. During the early years of the Restoration, between 1817 and 1825, while looking out for millions, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville refused Mademoiselle Mongenod, the banker's daughter, with whom Monsieur de Fontaine was content. And now, after various good matches had been marred by her pride, she had just decided that the fortune of the Nucingens had been amassed by too vile means to allow of her lending herself to Madame de Nucingen's ambitious desire to see her daughter a duchess. The King, anxious to restore the splendor of the Hérouvilles, had almost made the match himself, and he publicly taxed Mademoiselle d'Hérouville with folly. Thus the aunt made her nephew ridiculous, and the Duke laid himself open to ridicule.

It is a fact that when the great things of humanity vanish they leave some fragments (*frusteaux*, Rabelais would call them); and the French nobility in our day shows too many fag-ends. In this long study of manners neither the clergy nor the nobility have anything to complain of. Those two great and magnificent social necessities are well represented; but would it not be false to the proud title of Historian to be other than impartial, to fail to show here the degeneracy of the race—just as you will elsewhere find the study of an

émigré, the Comte de Mortsauf (*Le Lys dans la Vallée*), and every noblest feature of the noble, in the Marquis d'Espard (*L'Interdiction*)?

How was it that a race of brave and strong men, that the house of d'Hérouville, which gave the famous Marshal to the Royal cause, cardinals to the Church, captains to the Valois, and brave men to Louis XIV., ended in a frail creature smaller than Butscha? It is a question we may ask ourselves in many a Paris drawing-room, as we hear one of the great names of France announced, and see a little slender slip of a man come in who seems only to breathe, or a prematurely old fellow, or some eccentric being, in whom the observer seeks, but scarcely finds, a feature in which imagination can see a trace of original greatness. The dissipations of the reign of Louis XV., the orgies of that selfish time, have produced the etiolated generation in which fine manners are the sole survivors of extinct great qualities. Style is the only inheritance preserved by the nobility. Thus, apart from certain exceptions, the defection which left Louis XVI. to perish may be to some extent explained by the miserable heritage of the reign of Madame de Pompadour.

The Master of the Horse, a young man with blue eyes, fair, pale, and slight, had a certain dignity of mind; but his small size, and his aunt's mistake in having led him to be uselessly civil to the Vilquins, made him excessively shy. The d'Hérouvilles had had a narrow escape of dying out in the person of a cripple (*l'Enfant maudit*). But the Grand Marshal—as the family always called the d'Hérouville whom Louis XIII. had created Duke—had married at the age of eighty-two, and, of course, the family had been continued. The young Duke liked women; but he placed them too high, he respected them too much, he adored them, and was not at his ease but with those whom no one respects. This character had led to his living a twofold life. He avenged himself on women of easy life for the worship he paid in the drawing-rooms, or, if you like, the boudoirs of Saint-Germain. His ways and his tiny figure, his weary face, his blue eyes, with their somewhat ecstatic expression, had added to the ridicule poured on him, most unjustly, for he was full of

apprehensiveness and wit; but his wit had no sparkle, and was never seen excepting when he was quite at his ease. Fanny Beaupré, the actress, who was supposed to be his highly paid and most intimate friend, used to say of him, "It is good wine, but so tightly corked up that you break your corkscrews."

The handsome Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whom the Master of the Horse could only adore, crushed him by a speech which, unluckily, was repeated, as all clever but ill-natured speeches are.

"He reminds me," said she, "of a trinket, beautifully wrought, but which we show more than we use, and always keep in cotton wool."

Even his title of Master of the Horse would, by force of contrast, make good King Charles X. laugh, though the Duc d'Hérouville was a capital horseman. Men, like books, are sometimes valued too late. Modeste had had a glimpse of the Duke during his fruitless visit to the Vilquins, and as he went by, all these remarks involuntarily recurred to her mind; but in the position in which she now stood, she perceived how valuable the Duc d'Hérouville's suit would be to save her from being at the mercy of a Canalis.

"I do not see," said she to Latournelle, "why the Duc d'Hérouville should not be allowed to call. In spite of our indigence," she added, with a mischievous glance at her father, "I am supposed to be an heiress. I shall have at last to publish a card of the field.—Have you not noticed how Gobenheim's looks have changed in the course of this week? He is in despair because he cannot set down his faithful attendance for whist to the score of mute admiration of me!"

"Hush, my darling! here he is," said Madame Latournelle.

"Old Althor is in despair," said Gobenheim to Monsieur Mignon as he came in.

"What about?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"Vilquin is going to fail, they say, and on 'Change here you are said to have several millions——"

"No one knows," said Charles Mignon very dryly, "what my obligations in India may amount to, and I do not care to admit the public to my confidence in business matters.—"

Dumay," he added in his friend's ear, "if Vilquin is in difficulties, we may be able to get the place back for what he gave for it in ready money."

Such was the state of affairs brought about by chance when, on Sunday morning, Canalis and La Brière, preceded by a courier, arrived at Madame Amaury's villa. They were told that the Duc d'Hérouville and his sister had arrived on the previous Tuesday at a hired house in Graville, for the benefit of their health. This competition led to a jest in the town that rents would rise at Ingouville.

"She will make the place a perfect hospital if this goes on!" remarked Mademoiselle Vilquin, disgusted at not becoming a duchess.

The perennial comedy of *The Heiress*, now to be performed at the Chalet, might certainly, from the frame of mind in which it found Modeste, have been, as she had said in jest, a competition, for she was firmly resolved, after the overthrow of her illusions, to give her hand only to the man whose character should prove perfectly satisfactory.

On the morrow of their arrival, the rivals—still bosom friends—prepared to make their first visit to the Chalet that evening. They devoted the whole of Sunday and all Monday morning to unpacking, to taking possession of Madame Amaury's house, and to settling themselves in it for a month. Besides, the poet, justified by his position as Minister's apprentice in allowing himself some craft, had thought of everything; he wished to get the benefit of the excitement that might be caused by his arrival, of which some echoes might reach the Chalet. Canalis, supposed to be much fatigued, did not go out; La Brière went twice to walk past the Chalet, for he loved with a sort of desperation, he had the greatest dread of having repelled Modeste, his future seemed wrapped in thick clouds.

The two friends came down to dinner on that Monday in array for their first visit, the most important of all. La Brière was dressed as he had been in church on that famous Sunday; but he regarded himself as the satellite to a planet, and trusted wholly to the chance of circumstances. Canalis, on his part, had not forgotten his black coat, nor his orders,

nor the drawing-room grace perfected by his intimacy with the Duchesse de Chaulieu, his patroness, and with the finest company of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Canalis had attended to every detail of dandyism, while poor Ernest was prepared to appear in the comparative carelessness of a hopeless man.

As he waited on the two gentlemen at table, Germain could not help smiling at the contrast. At the second course he came in with a diplomatic, or, to be exact, a disturbed air.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he to Canalis in a low voice, "did you know that Monsieur the Master of the Horse is coming to Graville to be cured of the same complaint as you and Monsieur de la Brière?"

"The little Duc d'Hérouville?" cried Canalis.

"Yes, sir."

"Can he have come for Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked La Brière, coloring.

"For Mademoiselle Mignon," replied Germain.

"We are done!" cried Canalis, looking at La Brière.

"Ah!" Ernest eagerly replied, "that is the first time you have said *we* since we left Paris. Till this moment you have said *I*."

"You know me!" cried Melchior with a burst of laughter. "Well, we are not in a position to hold our own against an officer of the Household, against the titles of Duke and Peer, nor against the marsh-lands which the Privy Council has just conferred, on the strength of my report, on the House of Hérouville."

"His Highness," said La Brière with mischievous gravity, "offers you a plum of consolation in the person of his sister."

Just at this moment the Comte de la Bastie was announced. The two young men rose to receive him, and La Brière hastened to meet him and introduce Canalis.

"I had to return the visit you paid me in Paris," said Charles Mignon to the young Referendary, "and I knew that by coming here I should have the added pleasure of seeing one of our great living poets."

"Great?—Monsieur," the poet replied with a smile, "there can be nothing great henceforth in an age to which the reign

of Napoleon was the preface. To begin with, we are a perfect tribe of so-called great poets. And besides, second-rate talent apes genius so well that it has made any great distinction impossible."

"And is that what has driven you into politics?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"It is the same in that field too," said Canalis. "There will be no more great statesmen; there will be only men who are more or less in touch with events. Under the system produced by the Charter, Monsieur, which regards the schedule of the rates you pay as a patent of nobility, there is nothing substantial but what you went to find in China—a fortune."

Melchior, well pleased with himself, and satisfied with the impression he was making on his future father-in-law, now turned to Germain.

"Give us coffee in the drawing-room," said he, bowing to the merchant to leave the dining-room.

"I must thank you, Monsieur le Comte," said La Brière, "for having spared me the embarrassment of not knowing how I might introduce my friend at your house. To your kind heart you add a happy wit——"

"Oh, such wit as is common to the natives of Provence," said Mignon.

"Ah, you come from Provence?" cried Canalis.

"Forgive my friend," said La Brière; "he has not studied the history of the la Basties, as I have."

At the word friend, Canalis shot a deep look at Ernest.

"If your health permits," said the Provençal to the great poet, "I claim the honor of receiving you this evening under my roof. It will be a day to mark, as the ancients have it, *albo notanda lapillo*. Though we are somewhat shy of receiving so great a glory in so small a house, you will gratify my daughter's impatience, for her admiration has led her even to set your verses to music."

"You possess what is better than glory," said Canalis. "You have beauty in your home, if I may believe Ernest."

"Oh, she is a good girl, whom you will find quite provincial," said the father.

"Provincial as she is, she has a suitor in the Duc d'Hérouville," cried Canalis in a hard tone.

"Oh," said Monsieur Mignon, with the deceptive frankness of a southerner, "I leave my daughter free to choose. Dukes, princes, private gentlemen, they are all the same to me, even men of genius. I will pledge myself to nothing; the man my Modeste may prefer will be my son-in-law, or rather my son," and he looked at La Brière. "Madame de la Bastie is a German; she cannot tolerate French etiquette, and I allow myself to be guided by my two women. I would always rather ride inside a carriage than on the box. We can discuss such serious matters in jest, for we have not yet seen the Duc d'Hérouville, and I do not believe in marriages arranged by proxy any more than in suitors forced on girls by their parents."

"That is a declaration equally disheartening and encouraging to two young men who seek in marriage the philosopher's stone of happiness," said Canalis.

"Do not you think it desirable, necessary, and indeed good policy, to stipulate for perfect liberty for the parents, the daughter, and the suitors?" said Charles Mignon.

Canalis, at a glance from La Brière, made no reply, and the conversation continued on indifferent subjects. After walking two or three times round the garden, the father withdrew, begging the two friends to pay their visit.

"That is our dismissal," cried Canalis. "You understood it as I did. After all, in his place I should not hesitate between the Master of the Horse and either of us, charming fellows as we may be."

"I do not think so," said La Brière. "I believe that the worthy officer came simply to gratify his own impatience to see you, and to declare his neutrality while opening his house to us. Modeste, bewitched by your fame, and misled as to my identity, finds herself between Poetry and hard Fact. It is my misfortune to be the hard Fact."

"Germain," said Canalis to the servant who came in to clear away the coffee, "order the carriage round. We will go out in half an hour, and take a drive before going to the Chalet."

The two young men were equally impatient to see Modeste, but La Brière dreaded the meeting, while Canalis looked forward to it with a confidence inspired by conceit. Ernest's impulsive advances to her father, and the flattery by which he had soothed the merchant's aristocratic pride while showing up the poet's awkwardness, made Canalis determine that he would play a part. He resolved that he would display all his powers of attraction, but at the same time affect indifference, seem to disdain Modeste, and so goad the girl's vanity. A disciple of the beautiful Duchesse de Chaulieu, he here showed himself worthy of his reputation as a man who knew women well; though he did not really know them, since no man does who is the happy victim of an exclusive passion. While the luckless Ernest, sunk in a corner of the carriage, was crushed by the terrors of true love and the anticipated wrath, scorn, contempt—all the lightnings of an offended and disappointed girl—and kept gloomy silence, Canalis, not less silent, was preparing himself, like an actor studying an important part in a new play.

Neither of them certainly looked like a happy man.

For Canalis, indeed, the matter was serious. To him the mere fancy for marrying involved the breach of the serious friendship which had bound him for nearly ten years to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Though he had screened his journey under the common excuse of overwork—in which no woman ever believes, even if it is true—his conscience troubled him somewhat; but to La Brière the word Conscience seemed so Jesuitical that he only shrugged his shoulders when the poet spoke of his scruples.

“Your conscience, my boy, seems to me to mean simply your fear of losing the gratifications of vanity, some solid advantages, and a pleasant habit in sacrificing Madame de Chaulieu's affection; for, if you are successful with Modeste, you will certainly have nothing to regret in the aftermath of a passion so constantly reaped during these eight years past. If you tell me that you are afraid of offending your protectress, should she learn the real reason of your visit here, I can easily believe you. To throw over the Duchess and fail at the Chalet is staking too

much! And you mistake the distress of this alternative for remorse!"

"You know nothing about sentiment!" cried Canalis, nettled, as a man always is when he asks for a compliment and hears the truth.

"That is just what a bigamist would say to a dozen jurymen," said La Brière, laughing.

This epigram made a yet more disagreeable impression on Canalis; he thought La Brière much too clever and too free for a secretary.

The arrival of a handsome carriage, with a coachman in Canalis' livery, made all the greater sensation at the Chalet, because the two gentlemen were expected, and all the persons of this tale, excepting only the Duke and Butscha, were assembled there.

"Which is the poet?" asked Madame Latournelle of Dumay, as they stood in the window-bay, where she had posted herself on hearing the carriage-wheels.

"The one who marches like a drum-major," replied the cashier.

"Ah, ha!" said the lady, studying Melchior, who strutted like a man on whom the world has its eye.

Though rather severe, Dumay's judgment—a simple soul, if ever man was—had hit the mark. Canalis was, morally speaking, a sort of Narcissus; this was the fault of the great lady who flattered him immensely, and spoilt him as women older than their adorers always will flatter and spoil men. A woman past her first youth, who means to attach a man permanently, begins by glorifying his faults, so as to make all rivalry impossible; for her rival cannot at once be in the secret of that subtle flattery to which a man so easily becomes accustomed. Coxcombs are the product of this feminine industry, when they are not coxcombs by nature.

Hence Canalis, caught young by the beautiful Duchess, justified himself for his airs and graces by telling himself that they pleased a woman whose taste was law. Subtle as these shades of feeling are, it is not impossible to render them. Thus Melchior had a real talent for reading aloud, which had been much admired, and too flattering praise had led him

into an exaggerated manner, which neither poet nor actor can set bounds to, and which made de Marsay say—always de Marsay—that he did not declaim, but brayed out his verses, so fully would he mouth the vowels as he listened to himself. To use the slang of the stage, he pumped himself out, and made too long pauses. He would examine his audience with a knowing look, and give himself self-satisfied airs, with the aids to emphasis of “sawing the air” and “windmill action”—picturesque phrases, as the catchwords of Art always are. Canalis indeed had imitators, and was the head of a school in this style. This melodramatic emphasis had slightly infected his conversation and given it a declamatory tone, as will have been seen in his interview with Dumay. When once the mind has become foppish, manners show the influence. Canalis had come at last to a sort of rhythmic gait, he invented attitudes, stole looks at himself in the glass, and made his language harmonize with the position he assumed. He thought so much of the effect to be produced, that more than once Blondet, a mocking spirit, had bet he would pull him up short—and had done it—merely by fixing a set gaze on the poet’s hair, or boots, or the tail of his coat.

At the end of ten years these antics, which at first had passed under favor of youthful exuberance, had grown stale, and all the more so as Melchior himself seemed somewhat worn. Fashionable life is as fatiguing for men as for women, and perhaps the Duchess’s twenty years’ seniority weighed on Canalis more than on her; for the world saw her still handsome, without a wrinkle, without rouge, and without heart. Alas! neither men nor women have a friend to warn them at the moment when the fragrance of modesty turns rancid, when a caressing look is like a theatrical trick, when the expressiveness of a face becomes a grimace, when the mechanism of their liveliness shows its rusty skeleton. Genius alone can renew its youth like the serpent, and in grace, as in all else, only the heart never grows stale. Persons of genuine feeling are single-hearted. Now in Canalis, as we know, the heart was dry. He wasted the beauty of his gaze by assuming at inappropriate moments the intensity that deep thought gives to the eyes.

And, then, praise to him was an article of exchange, in which he wanted to have all the advantage. His way of paying compliments, which charmed superficial persons, to those of more refined taste might seem insultingly commonplace, and the readiness of his flattery betrayed a set purpose. In fact, Melchior lied like a courtier. To the Duc de Chaulieu, who had proved an ineffective speaker when, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, he had been obliged to mount the Tribune, Canalis had unblushingly said, "Your Excellency was sublime!"

Many men like Canalis might have had their affectations eradicated by failure administered in small doses. Trifling, indeed, as such faults are in the gilded drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—where everyone contributes a quota of absurdities, and this kind of audacity, artificiality, inflation if you will, has a background of excessive luxury and magnificent dress which is perhaps an excuse for it—they are monstrously conspicuous in the depths of the country, where what is thought ridiculous is the very opposite of all this. Canalis, indeed, at once pompous and mannered, could not now metamorphose himself; he had had time to set in the mold into which the Duchess had cast him, and he was, moreover, very Parisian, or, if you prefer it, very French. The Parisian is amazed that everything, everywhere, is not what it is in Paris, and the Frenchman that it is not what it is in France. Good taste consists in accommodating one's self to the manners of other places without losing too much of one's native character, as Alcibiades did—the model of a gentleman. True grace is elastic. It yields to every circumstance, it is in harmony with every social atmosphere, it knows how to walk in the street in a cheap dress, remarkable only for its fitness, instead of parading the feathers and gaudy hues which some vulgar people flaunt.

Now, Canalis, influenced by a woman who loved him for her own sake rather for his, wanted to be himself a law, and to remain what he was wherever he might go. He believed that he carried his private public with him—a mistake shared by some other great men in Paris.

While the poet made a studied entrance into the little drawing-room, La Brière sneaked in like a dog that is afraid of being beaten.

"Ah, here is my soldier!" said Canalis, on seeing Dumay, after paying Madame Mignon his respects, and bowing to the other women. "Your anxieties are relieved, I hope?" he went on, offering him his hand with a flourish. "But the sight of Mademoiselle sufficiently explains their gravity. I spoke only of earthly beings, not of angels."

The hearers by their expression asked for a clew to this riddle.

"Yes, I shall regard it as a triumph," the poet went on, understanding that everybody wanted an explanation, "that I succeeded in alarming one of those men of iron whom Napoleon succeeded in finding to form the piles on which he tried to found an empire too vast to be permanent. Only time can serve to cement such a structure!—But have I any right to boast of triumph? I had nothing to do with it; it was the triumph of fancy over fact. Your battles, dear Monsieur Dumay; your heroic cavalry charges, Monsieur le Comte; in short, War, was the form assumed by Napoleon's thoughts. And of all these things what remains? The grass that grows over them knows nothing of them, nor will harvests mark the spot; but for history, but for writing, the future might know nothing of this heroic age! Thus your fifteen years of struggle are no more than ideas, and that is what will save the Empire; poets will make a poem of it. A land that can win such battles ought to be able to sing them!"

Canalis paused to collect, by a sweeping glance at their faces, the tribute of admiration due to him from these country folks.

"You cannot doubt, Monsieur," said Madame Mignon, "how much I regret being unable to see you, from the way you indemnify me by the pleasure I feel in listening to you."

Modeste, dressed as she had been on the day when this story opens, having made up her mind to think Canalis sublime, sat speechless, and dropped her embroidery, which hung from her fingers at the end of the needleful of cotton.

"Modeste, this is Monsieur de la Brière.—Monsieur Ernest

—my daughter,” said Charles Mignon, thinking that the secretary was thrown rather too much into the background.

The young lady bowed coldly to Ernest, giving him a look intended to convey to the whole party that she had never seen him before.

“I beg your pardon,” said she, without a blush, “the fervent admiration I profess for our greatest poet is, in my friends’ eyes, a sufficient excuse for my having seen no one else.”

The clear young voice, with a ring in it like the famous tones of Mademoiselle Mars, enchanted the poor Referendary, already dazzled by Modeste’s beauty, and in his amazement he spoke a few words which, had they been true, would have been sublime—

“But he is my friend,” said he.

“Then you will have forgiven me,” she replied.

“He is more than a friend,” cried Canalis, taking Ernest by the shoulder, and leaning on him as Alexander leaned on Hephæstion. “We love each other like two brothers——”

Madame Latournelle cut the poet short in the middle of his speech by saying to her husband—

“Surely Monsieur is the gentleman we saw in church?”

“Why not?” said Charles Mignon, seeing Ernest color.

Modeste gave no sign, but took up her work again.

“You may be right; I have been twice to le Havre,” said La Brière, sitting down by the side of Dumay.

Canalis, bewildered by Modeste’s beauty, misunderstood the admiration she expressed, and flattered himself that his efforts had been perfectly successful.

“I should think a man of genius devoid of heart if he had not about him some attached friend,” said Modeste, to revive the subject interrupted by Madame Latournelle’s awkwardness.

“Mademoiselle, Ernest’s devotion is enough to make me believe that I am good for something,” said Canalis. “For my dear Pylades is full of talent; he was quite half of the greatest Minister we have had since the Peace. Though he fills a distinguished position, he consents to be my tutor in politics. He teaches me business, he feeds me with his experience, while

he might aspire to the highest office. Oh! he is much superior to me——”

At a gesture from Modeste, Melchior added gracefully—

“The poetry I write he bears in his heart; and if I dare speak so to his face, it is because he is as diffident as a nun.”

“Come, come, that will do,” said La Brière, who did not know how to look. “My dear fellow, you might be a mother wanting to get her daughter married.”

“How can you think, Monsieur, of becoming a politician?” said Charles Mignon to Canalis.

“For a poet it is abdication!” said Modeste. “Politics are the stand-by of men without imagination.”

“Nay, Mademoiselle, in these days the Tribune is the grandest stage in the world; it has taken the place of the lists of chivalry; it will be the meeting-place of every kind of intellect, as of old the army was of every form of courage.”

Canalis had mounted his war-horse; for ten minutes he declaimed on the subject of political life:—Poetry was the preface to a statesman. In these days the orator’s province was lofty generalization; he was the pastor of ideas. If a poet could show his countrymen the road of the future, did he cease to be himself? He quoted Chateaubriand, asserting that he would some day be more important on his political than on his literary side. The French Chambers would be the guiding light of humanity. Contests by words henceforth had taken the place of fighting on the battlefield. Such or such a sitting had been a second Austerlitz, and the speakers had risen to the dignity of generals; they spent as much of their life, courage, and strength, they wore themselves out as much as generals in war. Was not speech almost the most exhausting expenditure of vital power that man could indulge in, etc., etc.

This long harangue, made up of modern commonplace, but clothed in high-sounding phrases, newly-coined words, and intended to prove that the Baron de Canalis must some day be one of the glories of the Tribune, made a deep impression on the notary, on Gobenheim, on Madame Latournelle, and Madame Mignon. Modeste felt as if she were at the play

and fired with enthusiasm for the actor, exactly as Ernest was in her presence; for though the secretary knew all these fine phrases by heart, he was listening to them by the light of the girl's eyes, and falling in love to the verge of madness. To this genuine lover Modeste had eclipsed all the different Modestes he had pictured to himself when reading or answering her letters.

This visit, of which Canalis had fixed the limits beforehand, for he would not give his admirers time to get tired of him, ended by an invitation to dinner on the following Monday.

"We shall no longer be at the Chalet," said the Comte de la Bastie; "it is Dumay's home once more. I am going back to my old house by an agreement for six months, with the right of redemption, which I have just signed with Monsieur Vilquin in my friend Latournelle's office."

"I only hope," said Dumay, "that Vilquin may not be in a position to repay the sum you have lent him on it."

"You will be in a home suitable to your fortune," said Canalis.

"To the fortune I am supposed to have," Charles Mignon put in.

"It would be a pity," said the poet, with a charming bow to Modeste, "that this Madonna should lack a frame worthy of her divine perfections."

This was all that Canalis said about Modeste, for he had affected not to look at her, and to behave like a man who is not at liberty to think of marriage.

"Oh, my dear Madame Mignon, he is immensely clever!" exclaimed the notary's wife, when the gravel was heard crunching under the Parisian's feet.

"Is he rich? that is the question," said Gobenheim.

Modeste stood at the window, not missing a single gesture of the great poet's, and never casting a glance on Ernest de la Brière. When Monsieur Mignon came into the room again, and Modeste, after receiving a parting bow from the two young men as the carriage turned, had resumed her seat, a deep discussion ensued, such as country people indulge in on Paris visitors after a first meeting. Gobenheim reiterated

his remark, "Is he rich?" in reply to the trio of praise sung by Madame Latournelle, Modeste, and her mother.

"Rich?" retorted Modeste. "What can it matter? Cannot you see that Monsieur de Canalis is a man destined to fill the highest posts in the Government? He has more than wealth; he has the means of acquiring wealth!"

"He will be an Ambassador or a Minister," said Monsieur Mignon.

"The taxpayers may have to pay for his funeral nevertheless," said little Latournelle.

"Why?" asked Charles Mignon.

"He strikes me as being a man to squander all the fortunes which Mademoiselle Modeste so liberally credits him with the power of earning."

"How can Modeste help being liberal to a man who regards her as a Madonna?" said Dumay, faithful to the aversion Canalis had roused in him.

Gobenheim was preparing the whist-table, with all the more eagerness because since Monsieur Mignon's return Latournelle and Dumay had allowed themselves to play for ten sous a point.

"Now, my little darling," said the father to his daughter in the window recess, "you must own that papa thinks of everything. In a week, if you send orders this evening to the dressmaker you used to employ in Paris and to your other tradesmen, you may display yourself in all the magnificence of an heiress, while I take time to settle into our old house. You shall have a nice pony, so take care to have a habit made—the Master of the Horse deserves that little attention."

"All the more so as we must show our friends the country," said Modeste, whose cheeks were recovering the hues of health.

"The secretary," observed Madame Mignon, "is not much to speak of."

"He is a little simpleton," said Madame Latournelle. "The poet was attentive to everybody. He remembered to thank Latournelle for finding him a house, by saying to me that he seemed to have consulted a lady's taste. And the other stood there as gloomy as a Spaniard, staring hard,

looking as if he could swallow Modeste. If he had looked at me so, I should have been frightened."

"He has a very pleasant voice," Madame Mignon observed.

"He must have come to le Havre to make inquiries about the house of Mignon for the poet's benefit," said Modeste, with a sly look at her father. "He is certainly the man we saw in church."

Madame Dumay and the Latournelles accepted this explanation of Ernest's former journey.

"I tell you what, Ernest," said Canalis when they had gone twenty yards, "I see no one in the Paris world, not a single girl to marry, that can compare with this adorable creature!"

"Oh! it is all settled," replied La Brière, with concentrated bitterness; "she loves you—or, if you choose, she will love you. Your fame half won the battle. In short, you have only to command. You can go there alone next time; Modeste has the deepest contempt for me, and she is right, but I do not see why I should condemn myself to the torture of going to admire, desire, and adore what I never can possess."

After a few condoling speeches, in which Canalis betrayed his satisfaction at having produced a new edition of Cæsar's famous motto, he hinted at his wish to be "off" with the Duchesse de Chaulieu. La Brière, who could not endure the conversation, made an excuse of the loveliness of a rather doubtful night to get out and walk; he flew like a madman to the cliffs, where he stayed till half-past ten, given up to a sort of frenzy, sometimes walking at a great pace and spouting soliloquies, sometimes standing still or sitting down without observing the uneasiness he was giving to two coast-guards on the look-out. After falling in love with Modeste's mental culture and aggressive candor, he now added his adoration of her beauty, that is to say, an unreasoning and inexplicable passion, to all the other causes that had brought him ten days ago to church at le Havre.

Then he wandered back to the Chalet, where the Pyrenean dogs barked at him so furiously that he could not allow himself the happiness of gazing at Modeste's windows. In love.

all these things are of no more account than the underpainting covered by the final touches is to the painter; but they are nevertheless the whole of love, as concealed painstaking is the whole of art: the outcome is a great painter and a perfect lover, which the public and the woman worship at last—often too late.

“Well!” cried he aloud, “I will stay, I will endure. I shall see her and love her selfishly, for my own joy! Modeste will be my sun, my life, I shall breathe by her breath, I shall rejoice in her joys, I shall pine over her sorrows, even if she should be the wife of that egoist Canalis——”

“That is something like love, Monsieur!” said a voice proceeding from a bush by the wayside. “Bless me! is everybody in love with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?”

Butscha started forth and gazed at La Brière. Ernest sheathed his wrath as he looked at the dwarf in the moonlight, and walked on a few steps without replying.

“Two soldiers serving in the same company should be on better terms than that,” said Butscha. “If you are not in love with Canalis, I am not very sweet on him myself.”

“He is my friend,” said Ernest.

“Oh! then you are the little secretary?” replied the hunchback.

“I would have you to know, Monsieur,” said La Brière, “that I am no man’s secretary. I have the honor to call myself councilor to one of the High Courts of Justice of this realm.”

“I have the honor, then, of making my bow to Monsieur de la Brière,” said Butscha. “I have the honor to call myself head clerk to Maître Latournelle, the first notary in le Havre, and I certainly am better off than you are.—Yes—, for I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie almost every afternoon for the last four years, and I propose to live within her ken as one of the King’s household lives at the Tuileries. If I were offered the throne of Russia, I should reply, ‘I like the sun too well!’—Is not that as much as to say, Monsieur, that I care more for her than for myself—with all respect and honor? And do you suppose that the high and mighty Duchesse de Chaulieu will

look with a friendly eye on the happiness of Madame de Canalis, when her maid, who is in love with Monsieur Germain, and is already uneasy at that fascinating valet's long absence at le Havre, as she dresses her mistress's hair complains . . ."

"How do you know all this?" said La Brière, interrupting him.

"In the first place, I am a notary's clerk," replied Butscha. "And have you not observed that I have a hump? It is full of ingenuity, Monsieur. I made myself cousin to Mademoiselle Philoxène Jacmin, of Honfleur, where my mother was born, also a Jacmin—there are eleven branches of Jacmins at Honfleur.—And so my fair cousin, tempted by the hope of a highly improbable legacy, told me a good many things."

"And the Duchess is vindictive?" said La Brière.

"As vengeful as a queen, said Philoxène. She has not yet forgiven the Duke for being only her husband," replied Butscha. "She hates as she loves. I am thoroughly informed as to her temper, her dress, her tastes, her religion, and her meannesses, for Philoxène stripped her soul and body. I went to the Opera to see Madame de Chaulieu, and I do not regret my ten francs—I am not thinking of the piece. If my hypothetical cousin had not told me that her mistress had seen fifty springs, I should have thought it lavish to give her thirty; she has known no winter, my lady the Duchess!"

"True," said La Brière, "she is a cameo preserved by the onyx.—Canalis would be in great difficulties if the Duchess knew of his plans; and I hope, Monsieur, that you will go no further in an espionage so unworthy of an honest man."

"Monsieur," said Butscha proudly, "to me Modeste is the State. I do not spy, I forestall. The Duchesse de Chaulieu will come here if necessary, or will remain quietly where she is if I think it advisable."

"You?"

"I."

"And by what means?" asked La Brière.

"Ah, that is the question," said the little hunchback. He plucked a blade of grass. "This little plant imagines

that man builds palaces for its accommodation, and one day it dislodges the most firmly cemented marble, just as the populace, having found a foothold in the structure of the feudal system, overthrew it. The power of the weakest that can creep in everywhere is greater than that of the strong man who relies on his cannon. There are three of us, a Swiss league, who have sworn that Modeste shall be happy, and who would sell our honor for her sake.—Good-night, Monsieur. If you love Mademoiselle de la Bastie, forget this conversation, and give me your hand to shake, for you seem to me to have a heart!—I was pining to see the Chalet; I got here just as she put out her candle. I saw you when the dogs gave tongue, I heard you raging; and so I took the liberty of telling you that we serve under the same colors, in the regiment of loyal devotion!”

“Good,” replied Brière, pressing the hunchback’s hand. “Then be kind enough to tell me whether Mademoiselle Modeste ever fell in love with a man before her secret correspondence with Canalis?”

“Oh!” cried Butscha, “the mere question is an insult!—And even now who knows whether she is in love? Does she herself know? She has rushed into enthusiasm for the mind, the genius, the spirit of this verse-monger, this vendor of literary pinchbeck; but she will study him—we shall all study him; I will find some means of making his true character peep out from beneath the carapace of the well-mannered man, and we shall see the significant head of his ambition, and his vanity,” said Butscha, rubbing his hands. “Now unless Mademoiselle is mad enough to die of it——”

“Oh, she sat entranced before him as if he were a miracle!” cried La Brière, revealing the secret of his jealousy.

“If he is really a good fellow, and loyal, and loves her, if he is worthy of her,” Butscha went on, “if he gives up his Duchess, it is the Duchess I will spread a net for!—There, my dear sir, follow that path, and you will be at home in ten minutes.”

But Butscha presently turned back and called to the hapless Ernest, who, as an ardent lover, would have stayed all night to talk of Modeste.

“Monsieur,” said Butscha, “I have not yet had the honor of seeing our great poet; I am anxious to study that splendid phenomenon in the exercise of his functions; do me the kindness to come and spend the evening at the Chalet the day after to-morrow; and stay some time, for a man does not completely betray himself in an hour. I shall know, before anyone, if he loves, or ever will love, or ever could love Mademoiselle Modeste.”

“You are very young to——”

“To be a professor!” said Butscha, interrupting La Brière. “Ah, Monsieur, the deformed come into the world a hundred years old. Besides, a sick man, you see, when he has been ill a long time, becomes more knowing than his doctor; he understands the ways of the disease, which is more than a conscientious doctor always does. Well, in the same way, a man who loves a woman while the woman cannot help scorning him for his ugliness or his misshapen person, is at last so qualified in love that he could pass as a seducer, as the sick man at last recovers his health. Folly alone is incurable.—Since the age of six, and I am now five-and-twenty, I have had neither father nor mother; public charity has been my mother, and the King’s commissioner my father.—Nay, do not be distressed,” he said, in reply to Ernest’s expression, “I am less miserable than my position—— Well, since I was six years old, when the insolent eyes of a servant of Madame Latournelle’s told me that I had no right to wish to love, I have loved and have studied women. I began with ugly ones—it is well to take the bull by the horns. So I took for the first subject of my studies Madame Latournelle herself, who has been really angelic to me. I was perhaps wrong; however, so it was. I distilled her in my alembic, and I at last discovered hidden in a corner of her soul this idea, ‘I am not as ugly as people think!’—And in spite of her deep piety, by working on that idea, I could have led her to the brink of the abyss—to leave her there.”

“And have you studied Modeste?”

“I thought I had told you,” replied the hunchback, “that my life is hers, as France is the King’s! Now do you understand my playing the spy in Paris? I alone know all the

nobleness and pride, the unselfishness, and unexpected sweetness that lie in the heart and soul of that adorable creature—the indefatigable kindness, the true piety, the light-heartedness, information, refinement, affability——”

Butscha drew out his handkerchief to stop two tears from falling, and La Brière held his hand for some time.

“I shall live in her radiance! It comes from her, and it ends in me, that is how we are united, somewhat as nature is to God by light and the word.—Good-night, Monsieur, I never chattered so much in my life; but seeing you below her windows, I guessed that you loved her in my way.”

Butscha, without waiting for an answer, left the unhappy lover, on whose heart this conversation had shed a mysterious balm. Ernest determined to make Butscha his friend, never suspecting that the clerk’s loquacity was chiefly intended to open communications with Canalis’ house. In what a flow and ebb of thoughts, resolutions, and schemes was Ernest lapped before falling asleep; and his friend Canalis was sleeping the sleep of the triumphant, the sweetest slumber there is next to that of the just.

At breakfast the friends agreed to go together to spend the evening of the following day at the Chalet, and be initiated into the mild joys of provincial whist. To get rid of this day they ordered out the horses, both warranted to ride and drive, and ventured forth into a country certainly as unknown to them as China; for the least known thing in France to a Frenchman, is France.

As he reflected on his position as a lover rejected and scorned, the secretary made somewhat such a study of himself as he had been led to make by the question Modeste had put to him at the beginning of their correspondence. Though misfortune is supposed to develop virtues, it only does so in virtuous people; for this sort of cleaning up of the conscience takes place only in naturally cleanly persons. La Brière determined to swallow his griefs with Spartan philosophy, to preserve his dignity, and never allow himself to be betrayed into a mean action; while Canalis, fascinated by such an enormous fortune, vowed to himself that he would neglect

nothing that might captivate Modeste. Egoism and unselfishness, the watchwords of these two natures, brought them by a moral law, which sometimes has whimsical results, to behave in opposition to their characters. The selfish man meant to act self-sacrifice, the man who was all kindness would take refuge on the Aventine Hill of pride. This phenomenon may also be seen in politics. Men often turn their natures inside out, and not unfrequently the public do not know the right side from the wrong.

After dinner they heard from Germain that the Master of the Horse had arrived; he was introduced at the Chalet that evening by Monsieur Latournelle. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville managed to offend the worthy lawyer at once, by sending a message through a footman, desiring him to call at her house, instead of simply sending her nephew to take up the lawyer, who would certainly have talked till his dying day of the visit paid by the Master of the Horse. So when his lordship offered to take him to Ingouville in his carriage, the little notary merely said that he must return home to accompany his wife. Seeing by his sullen manner that there was something wrong, the Duke graciously replied, "If you will allow me, I shall have the honor of going round to fetch Madame Latournelle."

In spite of an emphatic shrug of his despotic aunt's shoulders, the Duke set out with the little notary. Intoxicated with the delight of seeing a magnificent carriage at her door, and men in the royal livery to let down the steps, the lawyer's wife did not know which way to turn for her gloves, her parasol, her bag, and her dignity, when it was announced to her that the Master of the Horse had come to fetch her. As soon as she was in the carriage, while pouring out civilities to the little Duke, she suddenly exclaimed with kindly impulse—

"Oh, and Butscha?"

"Bring Butscha too," said the Duke, smiling.

As the harbor-men, who had collected round the dazzling vehicle, saw these three little men with that tall meager woman, they looked at each other and laughed.

"If you stuck them together end to end, perhaps you

might make a man tall enough for that long May-pole," said a sailor from Bordeaux.

"Have you anything else to take with you, Madame?" the Duke asked jestingly, as the footman stood waiting for his orders.

"No, Monseigneur," replied she, turning scarlet, and looking at her husband as much as to say, "What have I done wrong?"

"His Lordship," said Butscha, "does me too much honor in speaking of me as a thing; a poor clerk like me is a nameless object."

Though he spoke lightly, the Duke colored and made no reply. Grand folks are always in the wrong to bandy jests with those below them. Banter is a game, and a game implies equality. And, indeed, it is to obviate the unpleasant results of such a transient familiarity that, when the game is over, the players have a right not to recognize each other.

The Duke's visit to le Havre was ostensibly for the settlement of an immense undertaking, namely, the reclaiming of a vast tract of land, left dry by the sea between two streams, of which the ownership had just been confirmed to the Hérrouville family by the High Court of Appeal. The proposed scheme was no less a matter than the adjustment of sluice gates to two bridges, to drain a tract of mud flats extending for about a kilometer, with a breadth of three or four hundred acres, to embank roads and dig dykes. When the Duc d'Hérrouville had explained the nature and position of the land, Charles Mignon observed that he would have to wait till nature had enabled the soil to settle by the consolidation of its still shifting natural constituents.

"Time, which has providentially enriched your estate, Monsieur le Duc, must be left to complete its work," said he, in conclusion. "You will do well to wait another fifty years before setting to work."

"Do not let that be your final opinion, Monsieur le Comte," said the Duke. "Come to Hérrouville, see, and judge for yourself."

Charles Mignon replied that some capitalist would need to look into the matter with a cool head; and this remark had

given Monsieur d'Hérouville an excuse for calling at the Chalet.

Modeste made a deep impression on him; he begged the favor of a visit from her, saying that his aunt and sister had heard of her, and would be happy to make her acquaintance. On this, Charles Mignon proposed to introduce his daughter to the two ladies, and invited them to dine with him on the day when he should be re-established in his former home; this the Duke accepted. The nobleman's blue ribbon, his title, and, above all, his rapturous glances, had their effect on Modeste; still, she was admirably calm in speech, manner, and dignity. The Duke when he left seemed loath to depart, but he had received an invitation to go to the Chalet every evening, on the pretext that, of course, no courtier of Charles X. could possibly endure an evening without a game of whist.

So, on the following evening, Modeste was to see her three admirers all on the stage at once.

Say what she will, it is certainly flattering to a girl to see several rivals fluttering around her, men of talent, fame, or high birth, all trying to shine and please her, though the logic of the heart will lead her to sacrifice everything to personal predilection. Even if Modeste should lose credit by the admission, she owned, at a later day, that the feelings expressed in her letters had paled before the pleasure of seeing three men, so different, vying with each other—three men, each of whom would have done honor to the most exacting family pride. At the same time, this luxury of vanity gave way before the misanthropical spirit of mischief engendered by the bitter affront which she already thought of merely as a disappointment. So when her father said to her with a smile—

“Well, Modeste, would you like to be a duchess?”

“Ill fortune has made me philosophical,” she replied, with a mocking courtesy.

“You are content to be Baroness?” said Butscha.

“Or Viscountess?” replied her father.

“How could that be?” said Modeste quickly.

“Why, if you were to accept Monsieur de la Brière, he

would certainly have influence enough with the King to get leave to take my title and bear my arms."

"Oh, if it is a matter of borrowing a disguise, he will make no difficulties!" replied Modeste bitterly.

Butscha did not understand this sarcasm, of which only Monsieur and Madame Mignon and Dumay knew the meaning.

"As soon as marriage is in question, every man assumes a disguise," said Madame Latournelle, "and women set them the example. Ever since I can remember I have heard it said, 'Monsieur this or Mademoiselle that is making a very good match'—so the other party must be making a bad one, I suppose?"

"Marriage," said Butscha, "is like an action at law; one side is always left dissatisfied; and if one party deceives the other, half the married couples one sees certainly play the farce at the cost of the other."

"Whence you conclude, Sire Butscha?" asked Modeste.

"That we must keep our eyes sternly open to the enemy's movements," replied the clerk.

"What did I tell you, my pet?" said Charles Mignon, alluding to his conversation with his daughter on the sea-shore.

"Men, to get married," said Latournelle, "play as many parts as mothers make their daughters play in order to get them off their hands."

"Then you think stratagem allowable?" said Modeste.

"On both sides," cried Gobenheim. "Then the game is even."

This conversation was carried on in a fragmentary manner, between the deals, and mixed up with the opinions each one allowed himself to express about Monsieur d'Hérouville, who was thought quite good-looking by the little notary, by little Dumay, and by little Butscha.

"I see," said Madame Mignon, with a smile, "that Madame Latournelle and my husband are quite monsters here!"

"Happily for him the Colonel is not excessively tall," replied Butscha, while the lawyer was dealing, "for a tall man who is also intelligent is always a rare exception."

But for this little discussion on the legitimate use of matrimonial wiles, the account of the evening so anxiously expected

by Butscha might seem lengthy; but wealth, for which so much secret meanness was committed, may perhaps lend to the minutiae of private life the interest which is always aroused by the social feeling so frankly set forth by Ernest in his reply to Modeste.

In the course of the next morning Desplein arrived. He stayed only so long as was needful for sending to le Havre for a relay of post-horses, which were at once put in—about an hour. After examining Madame Mignon, he said she would certainly recover her sight, and fixed the date for the operation a month later. This important consultation was held, of course, in the presence of the family party at the Chalet, all anxiously eager to hear the decision of the Prince of Science. The illustrious member of the Academy of Science asked the blind woman ten short questions, while examining her eyes in the bright light by the window. Modeste, amazed at the value of time to this famous man, noticed that his traveling chaise was full of books, which he intended to read on the way back to Paris, for he had come away on the previous evening, spending the night in sleeping and traveling.

The swiftness and clearness of Desplein's decisions on every answer of Madame Mignon's, his curt speech, his manner, all gave Modeste, for the first time, any clear idea of a man of genius. She felt the enormous gulf between Canalis, a man of second-rate talents, and Desplein, a more than superior mind.

A man of genius has in the consciousness of his talent, and the assurance of his fame, a domain, as it were, where his legitimate pride can move and breathe freely without incommoding other people. Then the incessant conflict with men and things gives him no time to indulge the coquettish conceits in which the heroes of fashion indulge, as they hastily reap the harvest of a passing season, while their vanity and self-love are exacting and irritable, like a sort of custom-house alert to seize a toll on everything that passes within its ken.

Modeste was all the more delighted with the great surgeon

because he seemed struck by her extreme beauty—he, under whose hands so many women had passed, and who for years had been scrutinizing them with the lancet and microscope.

“It would really be too bad,” said he, with the gallantry which he could so well assume, in contrast to his habitual abruptness, “that a mother should be deprived of seeing such a lovely daughter.”

Modeste herself waited on the great surgeon at the simple luncheon he would accept. She, with her father and Dumay, escorted the learned man, for whom so many sick were longing, as far as the chaise which waited for him at the side gate, and there, her eyes beaming with hope, she said once more to Desplein—

“Then dear mamma will really see me?”

“Yes, my pretty Will-o'-the-Wisp, I promise you she shall,” he replied, with a smile; “and I am incapable of deceiving you, for I too have a daughter.”

The horses whirled him off as he spoke the words, which had an unexpected touch of feeling. Nothing is more bewitching than the unforeseen peculiar to very clever men.

This visit was the event of the day, and it left a track of light in Modeste's soul. The enthusiastic child admired without guile this man whose life was at everybody's command, and in whom the habit of contemplating physical suffering had overcome every appearance of egoism.

In the evening, when Gobenheim, the Latournelles, Canalis, Ernest, and the Duc d'Hérrouville had assembled, they congratulated the Mignon family on the good news given them by Desplein. Then, of course, the conversation, led by Modeste, as we know her from her letters, turned on this man whose genius, unfortunately for his glory, could only be appreciated by the most learned men and the Medical Faculty. And Gobenheim uttered this speech, which is in our days the sanctifying anointing of genius in the ears of economists and bankers—

“He makes enormous sums.”

“He is said to be very greedy!” replied Canalis.

The praise lavished on Desplein by Modeste annoyed the

poet. Vanity behaves like Woman. They both believe that they lose something by praise or affection bestowed on another. Voltaire was jealous of the wit of a man whom Paris admired for two days, just as a duchess takes offense at a glance bestowed on her waiting maid. So great is the avarice of these two feelings, that they feel robbed of a pittance bestowed on the poor.

"And do you think, Monsieur," asked Modeste, with a smile, "that a genius should be measured by the ordinary standard?"

"It would first be necessary, perhaps," said Canalis, "to define a man of genius. One of his prime characteristics is inventiveness—the invention of a type, of a system, of a power. Napoleon was an inventor, apart from his other characteristics of genius. He invented his method of warfare. Walter Scott was an inventor, Linnæus was an inventor, so are Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier. Such men are geniuses above all else. They renew, or expand, or modify science or art. But Desplein is a man whose immense talent consists of applying laws that were previously discovered; in detecting, by natural intuition, the final tendency of every temperament, and the hour marked out by nature for the performance of an operation. He did not, like Hippocrates, lay the foundations of Science itself. He has not discovered a system, like Galen, Broussais, or Rasori. His is the genius of the executant, like Moscheles on the piano, Paganini on the violin, or Farinelli on his own larynx—men who display immense powers, but who do not create music. Between Beethoven and Madame Catalani you will allow that to him should be awarded the crown of genius and suffering; to her a vast heap of five-franc pieces. We can pay our debt to one, while the world must forever remain in debt to the other! We owe more and more to Molière every day, and we have already overpaid Baron."

"It seems to me that you are giving too large a share to ideas, my dear fellow," said La Brière, in a sweet and gentle voice that was in startling contrast to the poet's peremptory style, for his flexible voice had lost its insinuating tone and assumed the dominant ring of rhetoric. "Genius ought to

be estimated chiefly for its utility. Parmentier, Jacquard, and Papin, to whom statues will one day be erected, were also men of genius. They have in a certain direction altered, or will alter, the face of nations. From this point of view Desplein will always appear in the eyes of thinking men accompanied by a whole generation whose tears and sufferings have been alleviated by his mighty hand."

That Ernest should have expressed this opinion was enough to prompt Modeste to contest it.

"In that case, Monsieur," said she, "the man who should find means to reap corn without spoiling the straw, by a machine that should do the work of ten laborers, would be a man of genius?"

"Oh yes, my child," said Madame Mignon, "he would be blessed by the poor, whose bread would then be cheaper; and he whom the poor bless is blessed by God."

"That is to give utility the preference over art," said Modeste, with a toss of her head.

"But for utility," said her father, "on what would art be founded? On what basis would it rest, on what would the poet live, and who would give him shelter, who would pay him?"

"Oh, my dear father, that is quite the view of a merchant captain, a Philistine, a counter-jumper. That Gobenheim or Monsieur de la Brière should hold it I can understand; they are interested in the solution of such social problems; but you, whose life has been so romantically useless to your age, since your blood spilt on the soil of Europe, and the terrible sufferings required of you by a Colossus, have not hindered France from losing ten departments which the Republic had conquered,—how can you subscribe to a view so excessively *out of date*, as the Romantics have it?—It is easy to see that you have dropped from China."

The disrespect of Modeste's speech was aggravated by the scornful and contemptuous flippancy of the tone in which she intentionally spoke, and which astonished Madame Latournelle, Madame Mignon, and Dumay. Madame Latournelle, though she opened her eyes wide enough, could not see what Modeste was driving at; Butscha, who was as alert as a

spy, looked significantly at Monsieur Mignon on seeing his face flush with deep and sudden indignation.

"A little more, Mademoiselle, and you would have failed in respect to your father," said the Colonel with a smile, enlightened by Butscha's glance. "That is what comes of spoiling a child."

"I am an only daughter!" she retorted insolently.

"Unique!" said the notary, with emphasis.

"Monsieur," said Modeste to Latournelle, "my father is very willing that I should educate him. He gave me life, I give him wisdom—he will still be my debtor."

"But there is a way of doing it—and, above all, a time for it," said Madame Mignon.

"But Mademoiselle is very right," said Canalis, rising, and placing himself by the chimney-piece in one of the finest postures of his collection of attitudes. "God in His foresight has given man food and clothing, and has not directly endowed him with Art! He has said to man, 'To eat, you must stoop to the earth; to think, you must uplift yourself to Me!'—We need the life of the soul as much as the life of the body. Hence there are two forms of utility—obviously we do not wear books on our feet. From the utilitarian point of view, a canto of an epic is not to compare with a bowl of cheap soup from a charity kitchen. The finest idea in the world cannot take the place of the sail of a ship. An automatic boiler, no doubt, by lifting itself two inches, supplies us with calico thirty sous a yard cheaper; but this machine and the inventions of industry do not breathe the life of the people, and will never tell the future that it has existed; whereas Egyptian art, Mexican art, Greek or Roman art, with their masterpieces, stigmatized as useless, have borne witness to the existence of these nations through a vast space of time in places where great intermediate nations have vanished without leaving even a name-card, for lack of men of genius! Works of genius form the *summum* of a civilization, and presuppose a great use. You, no doubt, would not think a pair of boots better in itself than a drama, nor prefer a windmill to the Church of Saint-Ouen? Well, a nation is moved by the same spirit as an individual,

and man's favorite dream is to survive himself morally, as he reproduces himself physically. What survives of a nation is the work of its men of genius.

"At this moment France is a vigorous proof of the truth of this proposition. She is assuredly outdone by England in industry, commerce, and navigation; nevertheless, she leads the world, I believe, by her artists, her gifted men, and the taste of her products. There is not an artist, not a man of mark anywhere, who does not come to Paris to win his patent of mastery. There is at this day no school of painting but in France; and we shall rule by the Book more surely perhaps, and for longer, than by the Sword.

"Under Ernest's system the flowers of luxury would be suppressed—the beauty of woman, music, painting, and poetry. Society would not, indeed, be overthrown; but who would accept life on such terms? All that is useful is horrible and ugly. The kitchen is indispensable in a house, but you take good care never to stay in it; you live in a drawing-room, ornamented, as this is, with perfectly superfluous things. Of what use are those beautiful pictures and all this carved woodwork? Nothing is beautiful but what we feel to be useless. We have called the sixteenth century the age of the Renaissance with admirable accuracy of expression. That century was the dawn of a new world; men will still talk of it when some preceding ages are forgotten, whose sole merit will be that they have existed—like the millions of beings that are of no account in a generation."

"*Guenille, soit! ma guenille m'est chère*"—"A poor thing, but mine own," said the Duc d'Hérouville playfully, during the silence that followed this pompous declamation of prose.

"But," said Butscha, taking up the cudgels against Canalis, "does the art exist which, according to you, is the sphere in which genius should disport itself? Is it not rather a magnificent fiction which social man is madly bent on believing? What need have I for a landscape in Normandy hanging in my room, when I can go and see it so well done by God? We have in our dreams finer poems than the *Iliad*. For a very moderate sum I can find at Valognes, at Carentan,

as in Provence, at Arles, Venuses quite as lovely as Titian's. The *Police News* publishes romances, different indeed from Walter Scott's, but with terrible endings, in real blood, and not in ink. Happiness and virtue are far above art and genius!"

"Bravo, Butscha!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What did he say?" asked Canalis of La Brière, ceasing to watch Modeste, in whose eyes and attitude he read the delightful evidence of her artless admiration.

The scorn with which he had been treated, and, above all, the girl's disrespectful speech to her father, had so depressed the unhappy La Brière that he made no reply; his gaze, sadly fixed on Modeste, betrayed absorbed meditation. The little clerk's argument was, however, repeated with some wit by the Duc d'Hérouville, who ended by saying that the raptures of Saint Theresa were far superior to the inventions of Lord Byron.

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc," remarked Modeste, "that is wholly personal poetry, while Lord Byron's or Molière's is for the benefit of the world——"

"Then you must make your peace with the Baron," interrupted her father quickly. "Now you are insisting that genius is to be useful, as much so as cotton; but you will, perhaps, think logic as stale and out of date as your poor old father."

Butscha, La Brière, and Madame Latournelle exchanged half-laughing glances, which spurred Modeste on in her career of provocation, all the more because for a moment she was checked.

"Nay, Mademoiselle," said Canalis with a smile, "we have not fought nor even contradicted each other. Every work of art, whether in literature, music, painting, sculpture, or architecture, carries with it a positive social utility, like that of any other form of commercial produce. Art is the truest form of commerce; it takes it for granted. A book in these days helps its writer to pocket about ten thousand francs, and its production involves printing, paper-making, type-founding, and the bookseller's trade; that is to say, the occupation of thousands of hands. The performance of a

symphony by Beethoven or of an opera by Rossini demands quite as many hands, machines, and forms of industry.

"The cost of a building is a still more tangible answer to the objection. It may, indeed, be said that works of genius rest on a very costly basis, and are necessarily profitable to the working man."

Fairly started on this text, Canalis talked on for some minutes with a lavish use of imagery, and reveling in his own words; but it befell him, as often happens with great talkers, to find himself at the end of his harangue just where he started, and agreeing with La Brière, though he failed to perceive it.

"I discern with pleasure, my dear Baron," said the little Duke slyly, "that you will make a great constitutional Minister."

"Oh," said Canalis, with an ostentatious flourish, "what do we prove by all our discussions? The eternal truth of this axiom, 'Everything is true and everything is false.' Moral truths, like living beings, may be placed in an atmosphere where they change their appearance to the point of being unrecognizable?"

"Society lives by condemned things," said the Duc d'Hérouville.

"What flippancy!" said Madame Latournelle in a low voice to her husband.

"He is a poet," said Gobenheim, who overheard her.

Canalis, who had soared ten leagues above his audience, and who was, perhaps, right in his final philosophical dictum, took the sort of chill he read on every face for a symptom of ignorance; but he saw that Modeste understood him, and was content, never discerning how offensive such a monologue is to country folks, whose one idea is to prove to Parisians the vitality, intelligence, and good judgment of the provinces.

"Is it long since you last saw the Duchesse de Chaulieu?" asked the Duke of Canalis, to change the subject.

"I saw her six days ago," replied Canalis.

"And she is well?"

"Perfectly well."

"Remember me to her, pray, when you write."

"I hear she is charming," Modeste remarked to the Duke.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he, "knows more about that than I do."

"She is more than charming," said Canalis, accepting the Duke's perfidious challenge. "But I am partial, Mademoiselle; she has been my friend these ten years. I owe to her all that may be good in me; she has sheltered me from the perils of the world. Besides, the Duc de Chaulieu started me in the way I am going. But for their influence the King and Princesses would often have forgotten a poor poet as I am; my affection, therefore, is always full of gratitude."

And he spoke with tears in his voice.

"How much we all ought to love the woman who has inspired you with such sublime song and such a noble sentiment," said Modeste with feeling. "Can one conceive of a poet without a Muse?"

"He would have no heart," said Canalis; "he would write verse as dry as Voltaire's—who never loved anyone but Voltaire."

"When I was in Paris," said Dumay, "did you not do me the honor of assuring me that you felt none of the feelings you expressed?"

"A straight hit, my worthy soldier," replied the poet with a smile; "but you must understand that at the same time it is allowable to have a great deal of heart in the intellectual life as well as in real life. A man may express very fine sentiments without feeling them, or feel them without being able to express them. La Brière, my friend there, loves to distraction," said he generously, as he looked at Modeste. "I, who love at least as much as he does, believe—unless I am under an illusion—that I can give my passion a literary form worthy of its depth.—Still, I will not answer for it, Mademoiselle," said he, turning to Modeste with a rather over-elaborate grace, "that I shall not be bereft of wits by to-morrow——"

And thus the poet triumphed over every obstacle, burning in honor of his love the sticks they tried to trip him up with, while Modeste was dazzled by this Parisian brilliancy,

which was unfamiliar to her, and which lent a glitter to the orator's rhetoric.

"What a mountebank!" said Butscha in a whisper to Latournelle, after listening to a magniloquent tirade on the Catholic religion, and the happiness of having a pious wife, poured out in response to an observation from Madame Mignon.

Modeste had a bandage over her eyes; the effect of his delivery, and the attention she intentionally devoted to Canalis, prevented her perceiving what Butscha saw and noted—the declamatory tone, the lack of simplicity, rant taking the place of feeling, and all the incoherence which prompted the clerk's rather too severe epithet.

While Monsieur Mignon, Dumay, Butscha, and Latournelle wondered at the poet's want of sequence, overlooking, indeed, the inevitable digressions of conversation, which in France is always very devious, Modeste was admiring the poet's versatility, saying to herself as she led him to follow the tortuous windings of her fancy, "He loves me!"

Butscha, like all the other spectators of this performance, as we must call it, was struck by the chief fault of all egoists, which Canalis shows a little too much, like all men who are accustomed to speechify in drawing-rooms. Whether he knew beforehand what the other speaker meant to say, or merely did not listen, or had the power of listening while thinking of something else, Melchior wore the look of inattention which is as disconcerting to another man's flow of words as it is wounding to his vanity.

Not to attend to what is said is not merely a lack of politeness; it is an expression of contempt. And Canalis carries this habit rather too far, for he often neglects to reply to a remark that requires an answer, and goes off to the subject he is absorbed in without any polite transition. Though this form of impertinence may be accepted without protest from a man of position, it nevertheless creates a leaven of hatred and vengeful feeling at the bottom of men's hearts; in an equal, it may even break up a friendship.

When by any chance Melchior compels himself to listen, he falls into another failing—he only lends himself, he does

not give himself up. Nothing in social intercourse pays better than the bestowal of attention. "Blessed are they that hear!" is not only a precept of the Gospel, it is also an excellent speculation; act on it, and you will be forgiven everything, even vices. Canalis took much upon him in the intention of charming Modeste; but while he was sacrificing himself to her, he was himself all the while with the others.

Modeste, pitiless for the ten persons she was martyring, begged Canalis to read them some piece of his verse; she wanted to hear a specimen of that much-praised elocution.

Canalis took the volume offered him by Modeste and cooed—for that is the correct word—the poem that is supposed to be his finest, an imitation of Moore's "Loves of the Angels," entitled "Vitalis," which was received with some yawns by Mesdames Latournelle and Dumay, by Gobenheim, and the cashier.

"If you play whist well, Monsieur," said Gobenheim, offering him five cards spread out in a fan, "I have never met with so accomplished a gentleman."

The question made everyone laugh, for it was the expression of the common wish.

"I play it well enough to be able to end my days in a country town," replied Canalis. "There has, I dare say, been more of literature and conversation than whist players care to have," he added in an impertinent tone, flinging the book on to the side table.

This incident shows what dangers are incurred by the hero of a salon when, like Canalis, he moves outside his orbit; he is then in the case of an actor who is a favorite with one particular public, but whose talent is wasted when he quits his own stage and ventures on to that of a superior theater.

The Baron and the Duke were partners; Gobenheim played with Latournelle. Modeste sat down at the great poet's elbow, to the despair of Ernest, who marked on the capricious girl's countenance the progress of Canalis' fascination. La Brière had not known the power of seduction possessed by Melchior, and often denied by nature to genuine souls, who are generally shy. This gift demands a boldness and readi-

ness of spirit which might be called the acrobatic agility of the mind; it even allows of a little part-playing; but is there not, morally speaking, always something of the actor in a poet? There is, indeed, a wide difference between expressing feelings we do not experience though we can imagine them in all their variety, and pretending to have them when they seem necessary to success on the stage of private life; and yet, if the hypocrisy needful to a man of the world has cankered the poet, he easily transfuses the powers of his talent into the expression of the required sentiment, just as a great man who has buried himself in solitude at last finds his heart overflowing into his brain.

"He is playing for millions," thought La Brière in anguish; "and he will act passion so well that Modeste will believe in it!"

And instead of showing himself more delightful and wittier than his rival, La Brière, like the Duc d'Hérouville, sat gloomy, uneasy, and on the watch; but while the courtier was studying the heiress's vagaries, Ernest was a prey to the misery of black and concentrated jealousy, and had not yet won a single glance from his idol. He presently went into the garden for a few minutes with Butscha.

"It is all over, she is crazy about him," said he. "I am worse than disagreeable and, after all, she is right! Canalis is delightful, he is witty even in his silence, he has passion in his eyes, poetry in his harangues——"

"Is he an honest man?" asked Butscha.

"Oh yes," replied La Brière. "He is loyal, chivalrous; and under Modeste's influence he is quite capable of getting over the little faults he has acquired under Madame de Chaulieu——"

"You are a good fellow!" exclaimed the little hunchback. "But is he capable of loving—will he love her?"

"I do not know——" replied Ernest. "Has she mentioned me?" he asked after a short silence.

"Yes," said Butscha, and he repeated what Modeste had said about borrowing a disguise.

The young fellow threw himself on a seat and hid his face in his hands. He could not restrain his tears, and would

not let Butscha see them; but the dwarf was the man to guess them.

"What is wrong, Monsieur?" said he.

"She is right!" cried La Brière, suddenly sitting up. "I am a wretch."

He told the story of the trick he had been led into by Canalis, explaining to Butscha that he had wished to undeceive Modeste before she had unmasked; and he overflowed in rather childish lamentations over the perversity of his fate. Butscha's sympathy recognized this as love in its most vigorous and youthful artlessness, in its genuine and deep anxiety.

"But why," said he, "do you not make the best of yourself to Mademoiselle Modeste, instead of leaving your rival to prance alone?"

"Ah! you evidently never felt your throat tighten as soon as you tried to speak to her," said La Brière. "Do you not feel a sensation at the roots of your hair, and all over your skin, when she looks at you, even without seeing you?"

"Still you had your wits about you sufficiently to be deeply grieved when she as good as told her father that he was an old woman."

"Monsieur, I love her too truly not to have felt it like a dagger-thrust when I heard her thus belie the perfection I ascribed to her!"

"But Canalis, you see, justified her," replied Butscha.

"If she has more vanity than good feeling, she would not be worth regretting!" said Ernest.

At this moment Modeste came out to breathe the freshness of the starlit night with Canalis, who had been losing at cards, her father, and Madame Dumay. While his daughter walked on with Melchior, Charles Mignon left her and came up to La Brière.

"Your friend ought to have been an advocate, Monsieur," said he with a smile, and looking narrowly at the young man.

"Do not be in a hurry to judge a poet with the severity you might exercise on an ordinary man, like me, for instance, Monsieur le Comte," said La Brière. "The poet has his mission. He is destined by nature to see the poetical side of every question, just as he expresses the poetry of everything;

thus when you fancy that he is arguing against himself, he is faithful to his calling. He is a painter ready to represent either a Madonna or a courtesan. Molière is alike right in his pictures of old men and young men, and Molière certainly had a sound judgment. These sports of fancy which corrupt second-rate minds have no influence over the character of really great men."

Charles Mignon pressed the young fellow's hand, saying, "At the same time, this versatility might be used by a man to justify himself for actions diametrically antagonistic, especially in politics."

At this moment Canalis was saying in an insinuating voice, in reply to some saucy remark of Modeste's: "Ah, Mademoiselle, never believe that the multiplicity of emotions can in any degree diminish strength of feeling. Poets, more than other men, must love with constancy and truth. In the first place, do not be jealous of what is called 'The Muse.' Happy is the wife of a busy man! If you could but hear the lamentations of the wives who are crushed under the idleness of husbands without employment, or to whom wealth gives much leisure, you would know that the chief happiness of a Parisian woman is liberty, sovereignty in her home. And we poets allow the wife to hold the scepter, for we cannot possibly condescend to the tyranny exerted by small minds. We have something better to do.—If ever I should marry, which I vow is a very remote disaster in my life, I should wish my wife to enjoy the perfect moral liberty which a mistress always preserves, and which is perhaps the source of all her seductiveness."

Canalis put forth all his spirit and grace in talking of love, marriage, the worship of women, and arguing with Modeste, till presently Mignon, who came to join them, seized a moment's silence to take his daughter by the arm and lead her back to Ernest, whom the worthy Colonel had advised to attempt some explanation.

"Mademoiselle," said Ernest in a broken voice, "I cannot possibly endure to remain here the object of your scorn. I do not defend myself, I make no attempt at justification; I only beg to point out to you that before receiving your flatter-

ing letter addressed to the man and not to the poet—your last letter—I desired, and by a letter written at le Havre I intended, to dispel the mistake under which you wrote. All the feelings I have had the honor of expressing to you are sincere. A hope beamed on me when, in Paris, your father told me that he was poor;—but now, if all is lost, if nothing is left to me but eternal regrets, why should I stay where there is nothing for me but torture?—Let me only take away with me one smile from you. It will remain graven on my heart.”

“Monsieur,” said Modeste, who appeared cold and absent-minded, “I am not the mistress here; but I certainly should deeply regret keeping anyone here who should find neither pleasure nor happiness in staying!”

She turned away, and took Madame Dumay’s arm to go back into the house. A few minutes later all the personages of this domestic drama, once more united in the drawing-room, were surprised to see Modeste sitting by the Duc d’Hérouville, and flirting with him in the best style of the most wily Parisienne. She watched his play, gave him advice when he asked it, and took opportunities of saying flattering things to him, placing the chance advantage of noble birth on the same level as that of talent or of beauty.

Canalis knew, or fancied he knew, the reason for this caprice: he had tried to pique Modeste by speaking of marriage as a disaster, and seeming to be averse to it; but like all who play with fire, it was he who was burnt. Modeste’s pride and disdain alarmed the poet; he came up to her, making a display of jealousy all the more marked because it was assumed. Modeste, as implacable as the angels, relished the pleasure she felt in the exercise of her power, and naturally carried it too far. The Duc d’Hérouville had never been so well treated: a woman smiled on him!

At eleven o’clock, an unheard-of hour at the Chalet, the three rivals left, the Duke thinking Modeste charming, Canalis regarding her as a coquette, and La Brière heartbroken by her relentlessness.

For a week the heiress still remained to her three admirers just what she had been on that evening, so that the poet

seemed to have triumphed, in spite of the whims and freaks which from time to time inspired some hopes in the Duc d'Hérouville. Modeste's irreverence to her father, and the liberties she took with him; her irritability towards her blind mother, as she half-grudgingly did her the little services which formerly had been the delight of her filial affection, seemed to be the outcome of a wayward temper and liveliness tolerated in her childhood. When Modeste went too far she would assert a code of her own, and ascribe her levity and fractiousness to her spirit of independence. She owned to Canalis and the Duke that she hated obedience, and regarded this as an obstacle in the way of marriage, thus sounding her suitors' character after the manner of those who pierce the soil to bring up gold, coal, stone, or water.

"I shall never find a husband," said she, the day before that on which the family were to reinstate themselves in the Villa, "who will endure my caprices with such kindness as my father's, which has never failed for an instant, or the indulgence of my adorable mother."

"They know that you love them, Mademoiselle," said La Brière.

"Be assured, Mademoiselle, that your husband will know the full value of his treasure," added the Duke.

"You have more wit and spirit than are needed to break in a husband," said Canalis, laughing.

Modeste smiled, as Henri IV. may have smiled when, by extracting three answers to an insidious question, he had revealed to some foreign Ambassador the character of his three leading Ministers.

On the day of the dinner, Modeste, led away by her preference for Canalis, walked alone with him for some time up and down the graveled walk leading from the house to the lawn with its flower-beds. It was easy to perceive, from the poet's gestures and the young heiress's demeanor, that she was lending a favorable ear to Canalis, and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville came out to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* that scandalized them. With the tact natural to women in such cases, they turned the conversation to the subject of the Court, of the high position conferred by an office under the Crown, ex-

plaining the difference subsisting between an appointment to the Household and one held under the Crown; they tried, in fact, to intoxicate Modeste by appealing to her pride, and displaying to her one of the highest positions which a woman at that time could hope to attain.

"To have a Duke in your son," cried the old lady, "is a positive distinction. The mere title is a fortune out of reach of reverses, to bequeath to your children."

"To what ill-fortune," said Canalis, very ill pleased at this interruption to his conversation, "must we attribute the small success that the Master of the Horse has hitherto achieved in the matter in which that title is supposed to be of most service as supporting a man's pretensions?"

The two unmarried ladies shot a look at Canalis as full of venom as a viper's fangs, but were so put out of countenance by Modeste's sarcastic smile that they had not a word in reply.

"The Master of the Horse," said Modeste to Canalis, "has never blamed you for the diffidence you have learnt from your fame; why then grudge him his modesty?"

"Also," said the Duke's aunt, "we have not yet met with a wife worthy of my nephew's rank. Some we have seen who had merely the fortune that might suit the position; others who, without the fortune, had indeed the right spirit; and I must confess that we have done well to wait till God should give us the opportunity of making acquaintance with a young lady in whom should be united both the noble soul and the handsome fortune of a Duchesse d'Hérrouville!"

"My dear Modeste," said Hélène d'Hérrouville, walking away a few steps with her new friend, "there are a thousand Barons de Canalis in the kingdom, and a hundred poets in Paris who are as good as he; and he is so far from being a great man, that I, a poor girl, fated to take the veil for lack of a dower, would have nothing to say to him!—And you do not know, I dare say, that he is a man who has, for the last ten years, been at the beck and call of the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Really, none but an old woman of sixty could put up with the endless little ailments with which, it is said, the poet is afflicted, the least of which was unendurable in Louis XVI. Still, the

Duchess, of course, does not suffer from them as his wife would; he is not so constantly with her as a husband would be——”

And so by one of the maneuvers peculiar to woman against woman, *Hélène d'Hérouville* whispered in every ear the calumnies which women, jealous of *Madame de Chaulieu*, propagated concerning the poet. This trivial detail, not rare in the gossip of young girls, shows that the *Comte de la Bastie's* fortune was already made the object of ardent rivalry.

Within ten days, opinions at the *Chalet* had varied considerably about the three men who aspired to *Modeste's* hand. This change, wholly to the disadvantage of *Canalis*, was founded on considerations calculated to make the hero of any form of fame reflect deeply. When we see the passion with which an autograph is craved, it is impossible to doubt that public curiosity is strongly excited by celebrity. Most provincials, it is evident, have no very exact idea of the manner in which illustrious persons fasten their cravat, walk on the Boulevard, gape at the crows, or eat a cutlet; for, as soon as they see a man wearing the halo of fashion, or resplendent with popularity—more or less transient, no doubt, but always the object of envy—they are ready to exclaim, “Ah! so that is the thing!” or, “Well, that is odd!” or something equally absurd. In a word, the strange charm that is produced by every form of renown, even when justly acquired, has no permanence. To superficial minds, especially to the sarcastic and the envious, it is an impression as swift as a lightning-flash, and never repeated. Glory, it would seem, like the sun, is hot and luminous from afar, but, when we get near, it is as cold as the peak of an Alp. Perhaps a man is really great only to his peers; perhaps the defects inherent in the conditions of humanity are more readily lost to their eyes than to those of vulgar admirers. Thus, to be constantly pleasing, a poet would be compelled to display the deceptive graces of those persons who can win forgiveness for their obscurity by amiable manners and agreeable speeches, since, besides genius, the vapid drawing-room virtues and harmless domestic twaddle are exacted from him.

The great poet of the *Faubourg Saint-Germain*, who re-

fused to yield to this law of society, found that insulting indifference soon took the place of the fascination at first caused by his conversation at evening parties. Cleverness too prodigally displayed produces the same effect on the mind as a shop full of cut glass has on the eyes; this sufficiently explains that Canalis' glitter soon wearied those people who, to use their own words, like something solid. Then, under the necessity of appearing an ordinary man, the poet found many rocks ahead where La Brière could win the good opinion of those who, at first, had thought him sullen. They felt the desire to be revenged on Canalis for his reputation by making more of his friend. The most kindly people are so made. The amiable and unpretentious Referendary shocked nobody's vanity; falling back on him, everyone discerned his good heart, his great modesty, the discretion of a strong box, and delightful manners. On political questions the Duc d'Hérerville held Ernest far above Canalis. The poet, as erratic, ambitious, and mutable as Tasso, loved luxury and splendor, and ran into debt; while the young lawyer, even-minded, living prudently, and useful without officiousness, hoped for promotion without asking it, and was saving money meanwhile.

Canalis had indeed justified the good people who were watching him. For the last two or three days he had given way to fits of irritability, of depression, of melancholy, without any apparent cause—the caprices of temper that come of the nervous poetical temperament. These eccentricities—as they are called in a country town—had their cause in the wrong, which each day made worse, that he was doing to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, to whom he knew he ought to write, without being able to make up his mind to do it; they were anxiously noted by the gentle American and worthy Madame Latournelle, and more than once came under discussion between them and Madame Mignon. Canalis, knowing nothing of these discussions, felt their effect. He was no longer listened to with the same attention, the faces round him did not express the rapture of the first days, while Ernest was beginning to be listened to. For the last two days the poet had, therefore, been bent on captivating Modeste, and seized every moment when he could be alone with her to cast over her

the tangles of the most impassioned language. Modeste's heightened color plainly showed the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville with what pleasure the heiress heard insinuating conceits charmingly spoken; and, uneasy at the poet's rapid advances, they had recourse to the *ultima ratio* of women in such predicaments—to calumny, which rarely misses its aim when it appeals to vehement physical repulsion.

As he sat down to dinner, the poet saw a cloud on his idol's brow, and read in it Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's perfidy; so he decided that he must offer himself as a husband to Modeste at the first opportunity he should have of speaking to her. As he and the two noble damsels exchanged some subacid, though polite remarks, Gobenheim nudged Butscha, who sat next to him, to look at the poet and the Master of the Horse.

"They will demolish each other," said he in a whisper.

"Canalis has genius enough to demolish himself unaided," said the dwarf.

In the course of the dinner, which was extremely splendid, and served to perfection, the Duke achieved a great triumph over Canalis. Modeste, whose riding-habit had arrived the evening before, talked of the various rides to be taken in the neighborhood. In the course of the conversation that ensued she was led to express a strong wish to see a hunt—a pleasure she had never known. The Duke at once proposed to arrange a hunt for Mademoiselle Mignon's benefit in one of the Crown forest-lands a few leagues from le Havre. Thanks to his connection with the Master of the King's Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan, he had it in his power to show Modeste a scene of royal magnificence, to charm her by showing her the dazzling world of a Court, and making her wish to enter it by marriage. The glances exchanged by the Duke and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, which Canalis happened to catch, distinctly said, "The heiress is ours!"—enough to urge the poet, who was reduced to mere personal glitter, to secure some pledge of her affection without loss of time.

Modeste, somewhat scared at having gone further than she intended with the d'Hérouvilles, after dinner, when they were walking in the grounds, went forward a little distance in a

rather marked manner, accompanied by Melchior. With a young girl's not illegitimate curiosity, she allowed him to guess the calumnies repeated by Hélène, and on a remonstrance from Canalis she pledged him to secrecy, which he promised.

"These lashes of the tongue," said he, "are fair war in the world of fashion; your simplicity is scared by them; for my part, I can laugh at them—nay, I enjoy them. Those ladies must think his lordship's interests seriously imperiled, or they would not have recourse to them."

Then, profiting by the opportunity given by such a piece of information, Canalis justified himself with so much mocking wit, and passion so ingeniously expressed, while thanking Modeste for her confidence, in which he insisted in seeing a slight strain of love, that she found herself quite as deeply compromised towards the poet as she was towards the Duke. Canalis felt that daring was necessary; he declared himself in plain terms. He paid his vows to Modeste in a style through which his poetic fancy shone like a moon ingeniously staged, with a brilliant picture of herself—beautifully fair, and arrayed to admiration for this family festival. The inspiration so cleverly called up, and encouraged by the complicity of the evening, the grove, the sky, and the earth, led the grasping lover beyond all reason; for he even talked of his disinterestedness, and succeeded by the flowers of his eloquence in giving a new aspect to Diderot's stale theme of "*Five hundred francs and my Sophie*," or the "*Give me a cottage and your heart!*" of every lover who knows that his father-in-law has a fortune.

"Monsieur," said Modeste, after enjoying the music of this concerto so admirably composed on "a familiar theme," "my parents leave me such freedom as has allowed me to hear you; but you must address yourself to them."

"Well, then," cried Canalis, "only tell me that if I get their consent you will be quite satisfied to obey them."

"I know beforehand," said she, "that my father has some wishes which might offend the legitimate pride of a family as old as yours, for he is bent on transmitting his title and his name to his grandsons."

"Oh, my dear Modeste, what sacrifice would I not make to place my life in the hands of such a guardian angel as you are!"

"You must allow me not to decide my fate for life in one moment," said she, going to join the *Demoiselles d'Hérouville*.

These two ladies were at that minute flattering little *La-tournelle's* vanity in the hope of securing him to their interests. *Mademoiselle d'Hérouville*, to whom we must give the family name to distinguish her from her niece *Hélène*, was conveying to the notary that the place of President of the Court at *le Havre*, which *Charles X.* would give to a man recommended by them, was an appointment due to his honesty and talents as a lawyer. *Butscha*, who was walking with *La Brière*, in great alarm at *Melchior's* audacity and rapid progress, found means to speak to *Modeste* for a few minutes at the bottom of the garden steps as the party went indoors to give themselves up to the vexations of the inevitable rubber.

"*Mademoiselle*, I hope you do not yet address him as *Melchior*," said he in an undertone.

"Not far short of it, my *Mysterious Dwarf*," she replied, with a smile that might have seduced an angel.

"Good God!" cried the clerk, dropping his hands, which almost touched the steps.

"Well, and is not he as good as that odious gloomy *Referendary* in whom you take so much interest?" cried she, putting on for *Ernest* a haughty look of scorn, such as young girls alone have the secret of, as though their maidenhood lent them wings to soar so high. "Would your little *Monsieur de la Brière* take me without a settlement?" she added after a pause.

"Ask your father," replied *Butscha*, going a few steps on, so as to lead *Modeste* to a little distance from the windows. "Listen to me, *Mademoiselle*. You know that I who speak to you am ready to lay down not my life only, but my honor for you, at any time, at any moment. So you can believe in me, you can trust me with things you would not perhaps tell your father.—Well, has that sublime *Canalis* ever spoken to

you in the disinterested way that allows you to cast such a taunt at poor Ernest? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And you believe him? ”

“ That, Malignant Clerk,” said she, giving him one of the ten or twelve nicknames she had devised for him, “ is, as it seems to me, casting a doubt on the strength of my self-respect.”

“ You can laugh, dear Mademoiselle, so it cannot be serious. I can only hope that you are making a fool of him.”

“ What would you think of me, Monsieur Butscha, if I thought I had any right to mock at either of the gentlemen who do me the honor to wish for me as a wife? I can tell you, Maître Jean, that even when she appears to scorn the most contemptible admiration, a girl is always flattered at having it offered to her.”

“ Then I flatter you——? ” said the clerk, his face lighting up as a town is illuminated on some great occasion.

“ You——? ” said she. “ You give me the most precious kind of friendship, a feeling as disinterested as that of a mother for her child! Do not compare yourself to anyone else, for even my father is obliged to yield to me.” She paused. “ I cannot tell you that I love you, in the sense men give to the word; but what I feel for you is eternal, and can never know any change.”

“ Well, then,” said Butscha, stooping to pick up a pebble that he might leave a kiss and a tear on the tip of Modeste’s shoe, “ let me watch over you as a dragon watches over a treasure.—The poet spreads before you just now all the filigree of his elaborate phrases, the tinsel of his promises. He sang of love to the sweetest chord of his lyre no doubt. If when this noble lover is fully assured of your having but a small fortune, you should see his demeanor change; if you then find him cold and embarrassed, will you still make him your husband, still honor him with your esteem? ”

“ Can he be a Francisque Althor? ” she asked, with an expression of the deepest disgust.

“ Let me have the pleasure of working this transformation scene,” said Butscha. “ Not only do I intend that it shall be

sudden, but I do not despair of restoring your poet to you afterwards, in love once more, of making him blow hot and cold on your heart with as good a grace as when he argues for and against the same thing in the course of a single evening, sometimes without being aware of it——”

“And if you are right,” said she, “whom can I trust?”

“The man who truly loves you.”

“The little Duke?”

Butscha looked at Modeste. They both walked on a few steps in silence. The girl was impenetrable; she did not wince.

“Mademoiselle, will you allow me to put into words the thoughts that lurk at the bottom of your heart like water-mosses in a pool, and that you refuse to explain to yourself even?”

“Why, indeed!” cried Modeste, “is my privy councilor-in-waiting a mirror too?”

“No, but an echo,” he replied, with a little bow stamped with the utmost modesty. “The Duke loves you, but he loves you too well. I, a dwarf, have fully understood the exquisite delicacy of your soul. You would hate to be adored like the holy wafer in a monstrance. But, being so eminently a woman, you could no more bear to see a man of whom you were always secure perpetually at your feet, than you could endure an egoist like Canalis, who would always care more for himself than for you. . . . Why? I know not. I would I could be a woman, and an old woman, to learn the reason of the programme I can read in your eyes, which is perhaps that of every girl.

“At the same time, your lofty soul craves for adoration. When a man is at your feet you cannot throw yourself at his. ‘But you cannot go far in that way,’ Voltaire used to say. So the little Duke has, morally speaking, too many genuflexions, and Canalis not enough—not to say none at all. And I can read the mischief hidden in your smile when you are speaking to the Master of the Horse, when he speaks to you and you reply. You would never be unhappy with the Duke; everybody would be pleased if you chose him for your husband; but you would not love him. The coldness of egoism and the

excessive fervor of perennial raptures no doubt have a negative effect on the heart of every woman.

"Obviously this is not the perpetual triumph that you would enjoy in the infinite delights of such a marriage as that you dream of, in which you would find a submission to be proud of, great little sacrifices that are gladly unconfessed, successes looked forward to with rapture, and unforeseen magnanimity to which it is a joy to yield; in which a woman finds herself understood even to her deepest secrets, while her love is sometimes a protection to her protector——"

"You are a wizard!" cried Modeste.

"Nor will you meet with that enchanting equality of feeling, that constant sharing of life, and that certainty of giving happiness which makes marriage acceptable, if you marry a Canalis, a man who thinks only of himself, to whom *I* is the only note in the scale, and whose attention has not yet condescended so low as to listen to your father or the Duke. An ambitious man, not of the first class, to whom your dignity and supremacy matter little, who will treat you as a necessary chattel in his house, who insults you already by his indifference on points of honor. Yes, if you allowed yourself to go so far as to slap your mother, Canalis would shut his eyes that he might not see your guilt, so hungry is he for your fortune!"

"So, Mademoiselle, I was not thinking of the great poet, who is but a little actor, nor of my lord Duke, who would be for you a splendid match, but not a husband——"

"Butscha, my heart is a blank page on which you yourself write what you read," replied Modeste. "You are carried away by your provincial hatred of everything that compels you to look above your head. You cannot forgive the poet for being a political man, for having an eloquent tongue, and a splendid future; you calumniate his purpose——"

"His, Mademoiselle! He would turn his back on you within twenty-four hours with the meanness of a Vilquin."

"Well, make him play such a farcical scene, and——"

"Ay, and in every key; in three days—on Wednesday—do not forget. Until then, Mademoiselle, amuse yourself by making the musical box play all its airs, that the vile discords of the antiphony may come out all the more clearly."

Modeste gayly returned to the drawing-room, where of all the men present, La Brière alone, seated in the recess of a window—whence, no doubt, he had been looking at his idol—rose at her entrance, as if an usher had shouted, “The Queen!” It was a respectful impulse, full of the eloquence peculiar to action, which surpasses that of the finest speech. Spoken love is not to be compared with love in action—every girl of twenty is fifty as concerns this axiom; this is the seducer’s strongest argument.

Instead of looking Modeste in the face, as Canalis did, bowing to her as an act of public homage, the disdained lover watched her with a slow side glance, as humble as Butscha’s, almost timid. The young heiress observed this demeanor as she went to place herself by Canalis, in whose game she affected an interest. In the course of the conversation, La Brière learnt, from a remark she made to her father, that Modeste intended to begin riding again on the following Wednesday, and she mentioned that she had no riding-whip suitable to match with her handsome new habit. Ernest flashed a glance at the dwarf like a spark of fire, and a few minutes later they were walking together on the terrace.

“It is now nine o’clock,” said La Brière. “I am off to Paris as fast as my horse will carry me. I can be there by ten to-morrow morning. My dear Butscha, from you she will accept a gift with pleasure, for she has a great regard for you; let me give her a riding-whip in your name; and, believe me, in return for such an immense favor you have in me not indeed a friend, but a slave!”

“Go; you are happy,” said the clerk. “You have money.”

“Tell Canalis from me that I shall not be in to-night, and that he must invent some excuse for my absence for two days.”

An hour later Ernest had set out on horseback for Paris, where he arrived after twelve hours’ riding, his first care being to secure a place in the mail coach for le Havre on the following day. He then went to the three first jewelers in Paris, comparing handles of riding-whips, and seeking what art could produce of the most royal perfection. He found one made by Stidmann for a Russian lady, who, after ordering it,

had been unable to pay for it—a fox-hunt wrought in gold, with a ruby at the top, and exorbitantly expensive as compared with a Referendary's stipend; all his savings were swallowed up, amounting to seven thousand francs. Ernest gave a sketch of the arms of la Bastie, allowing twenty hours for them to be engraved instead of those that were on it. This handle, a masterpiece of workmanship, was fitted to an india-rubber whip, and placed in a red morocco case, lined with velvet, with a monogram of two M's on the top.

By Wednesday morning La Brière had returned by the mail, in time to breakfast with Canalis. The poet had explained his secretary's absence by saying that he was busy with some work forwarded from Paris. Butscha, who had gone to the coach office to hold out a welcoming hand to Ernest on the arrival of the mail, flew to give this work of art to Françoise Cochet, desiring her to place it on Modeste's dressing-table.

"You are going out riding, no doubt, with Mademoiselle Modeste," said Butscha, on returning to Canalis' villa to inform Ernest, by a side glance, that the whip had safely reached its destination.

"I!" said La Brière. "I am going to bed."

"Well!" exclaimed Canalis, looking at his friend, "I do not understand you at all."

Breakfast was ready, and the poet naturally invited the clerk to sit down with them. Butscha had stayed, intending to get himself invited if necessary by La Brière, seeing on Germain's countenance the success of a hunchback's trick, of which his promise to Modeste may have given a hint.

"Monsieur was very wise to keep Monsieur Latournelle's clerk," said Germain in his master's ear. Canalis and Germain, on a hint from the latter, passed into the drawing-room. "This morning I went out to see some fishing, an expedition to which I was invited the day before yesterday by the owner of a boat I have made acquaintance with."

Germain did not confess that he had had such bad taste as to play billiards in a café in le Havre, where Butscha had surrounded him with a number of his friends in order to be able to work upon him.

“What then?” said Canalis. “Come to the point, and at once.”

“Monsieur le Baron, I heard a discussion about Monsieur Mignon, which I did my best to keep going—no one knew who I lived with. I tell you, Monsieur le Baron, everybody in le Havre says that you are running your head against a wall. Mademoiselle de la Bastie’s fortune is, like her name, very modest. The ship on which the father came home is not his own; it belongs to some China merchants, with whom he has to settle, and things are said about it that are far from flattering to the Colonel.—Having heard that you and Monsieur le Duc were rivals for Mademoiselle de la Bastie, I take the liberty of mentioning it; for, between you and him, it is better that his Lordship should swallow the bait. On my way back I took a turn on the quay, past the theater, where the merchants walk up and down, and I pushed my way boldly among them. These worthy folks, seeing a well-dressed man, began to talk about the affairs of the town; from one thing to another I led them to speak of Colonel Mignon; and they were so much of the same mind as the fisherman that I felt it my duty to speak. That is why I left you, sir, to get up and dress alone . . .”

“What is to be done?” cried Canalis, feeling that he was too deeply pledged to withdraw from his promises to Modeste.

“You know my attachment to you, sir,” said Germain, seeing that the poet was thunderstruck, “and you will not be surprised if I offer a piece of advice. If you can make this clerk drunk, he will let the cat out of the bag, and if he won’t open his mouth for two bottles of champagne, he certainly will for the third. It would be a strange thing, too, if Monsieur, who will certainly be an ambassador one day, for Philoxène heard Madame la Duchesse say so,—if you, sir, cannot get round a country lawyer’s clerk.”

At this moment Butscha, the unknown author of this fishing expedition, was begging the Referendary to say nothing about his journey to Paris, and not to interfere with his maneuvers at breakfast. Butscha meant to take advantage of a reaction of feeling unfavorable to Charles Mignon, which had set in at le Havre.

This was the cause of this reaction. Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie had entirely ignored those of his former friends who, during his absence, had neglected his wife and children. On hearing that a dinner was to be given at the Villa Mignon, each one flattered himself he would be among the guests, and expected an invitation; but when it was known that only Gobenheim, the Latournelles, the Duke, and the two Parisians were to be asked, there was a loud outcry at the merchant's arrogance; his marked avoidance of seeing anybody, and of ever going down to le Havre, was commented on, and attributed to scorn, on which the whole town avenged itself by casting doubts on Mignon's sudden wealth. By dint of gossip everybody soon ascertained that the money advanced to Vilquin on the Villa had been found by Dumay. This fact gave the most malignant persons grounds for the libelous supposition that Charles had confided to Dumay's known devotion the funds concerning which he anticipated litigation on the part of his so-called partners in Canton. Charles's reticence, for his constant aim was to conceal his wealth, and the gossip of his servants, who had been put on their guard, lent an appearance of truth to these monstrous fables, believed by all who were governed by the spirit of detraction that animates rival traders. In proportion as parochial pride had formerly cried up his immense fortune as one of the makers of le Havre, so now provincial jealousy cast doubts on it.

Butscha, to whom the fishermen of the port owed more than one good turn, desired them to be secret, and to cram their new friend. He was well served. The owner of the boat told Germain that a cousin of his, a sailor, was coming from Marseilles, having just been paid off in consequence of the sale of the brig in which the Colonel had come home. The vessel was being sold by order of one Castagnould, and the cargo—according to the cousin—was worth only three or four hundred thousand francs at most.

"Germain," said Canalis, as the servant was leaving the room, "bring us up some Champagne and some Bordeaux. A member of the legal faculty of Normandy must carry away some memories of a poet's hospitality.—And he has the wit of *le Figaro*," added Canalis, laying his hand on the dwarf's

shoulder; "that *petit-journal* brilliancy must be made to sparkle and foam with the wine of Champagne; we will not spare ourselves either, Ernest! Why, it is two years at least since I last got tipsy," he added, turning to La Brière.

"With wine?—That I can quite understand," replied the clerk. "You get tipsy with yourself every day! In the matter of praise, you drink your fill. You are handsome; you are famous during your lifetime; your conversation is on a level with your genius; and you fascinate all the women, even my master's wife. Loved as you are by the most beautiful Sultana Valideh I ever saw—it is true, I have never seen another—you can, if you choose, marry Mademoiselle de la Bastie.—Why, merely with making this inventory of your present advantages, to say nothing of the future—a fine title, a peerage, an embassy!—I am quite fuddled, like the men who bottle wine for other people to drink."

"All this social magnificence is nothing," replied Canalis, "without that which gives them value—a fortune! Here we are men among men; fine sentiments are delightful in stanzas."

"And in certain *circumstanzas*," said Butscha, with a significant shrug.

"You, a master of the mystery of settlements," said the poet, smiling at the pun, "must know as well as I do that cottage rhymes to nothing better than pottage."

At table Butscha played with signal success the part of le Rigaudin in *La Maison en Loterie*, alarming Ernest, to whom the jests of a lawyer's office were unfamiliar; they are a match for those of the studio. The clerk repeated all the scandal of le Havre, the history of every fortune, of every boudoir, and of all the crimes committed just outside the pale of the law, what is called sailing as close hauled as possible (in Normandy, *se tirer d'affaire comme on peut*). He spared no one, and his spirits rose with the stream of wine he poured down his throat like storm water through a gutter.

"Do you know, La Brière," said Canalis, filling up Butscha's glass, "that this brave boy would be a first-rate secretary to an Ambassador?"

"And cut out his master!" retorted the dwarf with a look at Canalis, of insolence redeemed by the sparkle of carbonic

acid gas. "I have enough spirit of intrigue and little enough gratitude to climb on to your shoulders. A poet supporting an abortion!—Well, it has been seen, and pretty frequently—in libraries. Why, you are staring at me as if I were swallowing swords. Heh! my dear, great genius, you are a very superior man; you know full well that gratitude is a word for idiots; it is to be found in the dictionary, but not in the human heart. I O U is a formula unhonored on the green banks of Parnassus or Pindus. Do you suppose I feel the debt to my master's wife for having brought me up? Why, the whole town has paid it off in esteem, praise, and admiration, the most precious of all coin. I do not see the virtue that is merely an investment for the benefit of one's vanity. Men make a trade of reciprocal services; the word gratitude represents the debit side, that is all.

"As to intrigue, I adore it!—What!" he went on, in reply to a gesture from Canalis, "do you not delight in the faculty which enables a crafty man to get the upper hand of a man of genius, which requires constant observation of the vices and weaknesses of our betters, and a sense of the nick of time for everything? Ask diplomacy whether the triumph of cunning over strength is not the most delightful success there is. If I were your secretary, Monsieur le Baron, you would soon be Prime Minister, because it would be to my interest!—Now, would you like a sample of my little talents of that kind? Harken! You love Mademoiselle Modeste to distraction, and you are very right. In my opinion, the girl is a genuine Parisienne, for here and there a Parisienne sprouts in the country. Our Modeste would be a wife to push a man. She has that sort of thing," said he, giving his hand a twirl in the air. "You have a formidable rival in the Duke. Now, what will you give me to pack him off within three days?"

"Let us finish this bottle," said the poet, refilling Butscha's glass.

"You will make me drunk!" said the clerk, swallowing down his ninth glass of champagne. "Is there a bed where I may sleep for an hour? My master is as sober as a camel, the old fox, and Madame Latournelle too. They would both be

hard upon me, and they would have good reason, while I should have lost mine, and I have some work to do."

Then going back to a former subject without any transition, after the manner of a man when he is screwed, he exclaimed—

"And then, what a memory I have! It is a match for my gratitude."

"Butscha!" exclaimed the poet, "just now you said that you had no gratitude; you are contradicting yourself."

"Not at all," said the clerk. "Forgetting almost always means remembering!—Now, then, on we go! I am made to be a secretary."

"And how will you set to work to get rid of the Duke?" asked Canalis, charmed to find the conversation tending naturally to the subjects he aimed at.

"That—is no concern of yours," said Butscha, with a tremendous hiccough.

Butscha rolled his head on his shoulders, and his eyes from Germain to La Brière, and from La Brière to Canalis, in the manner of a man who feels intoxication creeping over him, and wants to know in what esteem he is held; for in the wreck of drunkenness it may be noted that self-esteem is the last sentiment to float.

"Look here, great poet, you are a jolly fellow, you are. Do you take me for one of your readers, you who sent your friend to Paris to procure information concerning the house of Mignon? I humbug, you humbug, we humbug. Well and good; but do me the honor to believe that I am clear-headed enough always to keep as much conscience as I need in my sphere of life. As head clerk to Maître Latournelle my heart is a padlocked dispatch-box, my lips never breathe a word of any paper concerning the clients. I know everything, and I know nothing. And then, passion is no secret: I love Modeste, she is a pupil of mine, she must marry well; and I could get round the Duke if necessary. But you are going to marry——"

"Germain, coffee and liqueurs," said Canalis.

"Liqueurs?" repeated Butscha, holding up a forbidding hand like a too knowing maiden putting aside some little

temptation. "Oh, my poor work! By the way, there is a marriage contract to be drawn up, and my second clerk is as stupid as a matrimonial bargain, and quite capable of p-p-poking a penknife through the bride's personal property. He thinks himself a fine fellow because he measures nearly six-feet—the idiot!"

"Here, this is Crème de Thé, a West Indian liqueur," said Canalis.—"You are Mademoiselle Modeste's adviser——"

"Her adviser?——"

"Well, do you think she loves me?"

"Ye-e-es, more than she loves the Duke," drawled the dwarf, rousing himself from a sort of torpor, which he acted to admiration. "She loves you for your disinterestedness. She told me that for you she felt equal to the greatest sacrifices, to giving up dress, spending only a thousand francs a year, devoting her life to prove to you that in marrying her you would have done a stroke of business. And she is devilish honest [hiccough], I can tell you, and well informed; there is nothing that girl does not know."

"That and three hundred thousand francs," said Canalis.

"Oh! there may be as much as you say," replied the clerk with enthusiasm. "Mignon Papa—and you see he is really a Mignon, a dear papa, that's what I like him for—to marry his only daughter—well, he would strip himself of everything. The Colonel has been accustomed under your Restoration to live on half-pay [hiccough], and he will be quite happy living with Dumay, speculating in a small way at le Havre; he will be sure to give the child his three hundred thousand francs.—Then we must not forget Dumay, who means to leave his fortune to Modeste. Dumay, you know, is a Breton; his birth gives security to the bargain; he never changes his mind, and his fortune is quite equal to his master's. At the same time, since they listen to me at least as much as to you, though I do not talk so much nor so well, I said to them, 'You are putting too much money into your house; if Vilquin leaves it on your hands, there are two hundred thousand francs that will bring you no return. There will be only a hundred thousand francs left to turn over, and that, in my opinion, is

not enough.'—At this moment the Colonel and Dumay are talking it over. Take my word for it, Modeste is rich. The people of the town talk nonsense, they are envious. Why, who in the department has such a portion?" said Butscha, holding up his fingers to count. "Two to three hundred thousand francs in hard cash!" said he, folding down his left thumb with the forefinger of his right hand. "That is for one. The freehold of the Villa Mignon," and he doubled down his left forefinger, "for two; Dumay's fortune for three," he added, ticking it off on the middle finger. "Why, little Mother Modeste is a lady with six hundred thousand francs of her own when the two old soldiers shall have gone aloft to take further orders from God A'mighty."

This blunt and artless communication, broken by sips of liqueur, sobered Canalis as much as it seemed to intoxicate Butscha. To the lawyer's clerk, a mere provincial, this fortune was evidently colossal. He let his head drop on the palm of his right hand, and with the elbow majestically resting on the table, he sat blinking and talking to himself: "In twenty years, at the pace the Code is taking us, melting down fortunes by the process of subdivision, an heiress with six hundred thousand francs will be as rare as disinterestedness in a money-lender. You may say that Modeste will spend at least twelve thousand francs a year, the interest of her fortune; but she is a very nice girl—very nice—very nice. She is as you may say—a poet must have imagery—she is an ermine as knowing as a monkey."

"And what did you tell me?" cried Canalis in an undertone to La Brière. "That she had six millions?"

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "allow me to remark that I could say nothing. I am bound by an oath, and it is perhaps saying more than I ought to tell you——"

"An oath? and to whom?"

"To Monsieur Mignon."

"Why, Ernest! when you know how indispensable fortune is to me"—Butscha was snoring—"you who know my position, and all I should lose in the Rue de Grenelle by marrying—you would have coolly allowed me to plunge in?" said Canalis, turning pale. "But this is a matter between friends;

and our friendship, my boy, is a compact of a far older date than this that the wily Provençal has required of you."

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "I love Modeste too well to——"

"Idiot, take her!" cried the poet. "So break your oath——"

"Do you solemnly promise, on your honor as a man, to forget what I tell you, and to be just the same to me as though I had never confided it to you, come what may?"

"I swear it by the sacred memory of my mother!"

"Well, when I was in Paris, Monsieur Mignon told me that he was very far from having such a colossal fortune as the Mongenods had spoken of. The Colonel intends to give his daughter two hundred thousand francs. But then, Melchior, was the father suspicious? or was he sincere? It is no concern of mine to solve that question. If she should condescend to choose me, Modeste, with nothing, should be my wife."

"A blue-stocking, appallingly learned, who has read everything and knows everything—in theory," cried Canalis, in reply to a protesting gesture of La Brière's; "a spoilt child, brought up in luxury during her early years, and weaned from it for the last five! Oh, my poor friend, pause, consider——"

"Ode and Code!" said Butscha, rousing himself. "You go in for the Ode, and I for the Code; there is only a C between. Code, from coda, a tail! You have treated me handsomely, and I like you—don't have anything to do with the Code.—Listen; a piece of good advice is not a bad return for your wine and your Crème de Thé. Old Mignon is cream too, the cream of good fellows. Well, trot out your horse, he is riding out with his daughter; you can speak frankly to him; ask him about her marriage portion; he will give you a plain answer, and you will see to the bottom of things as sure as I am tipsy and you are a great man; but then there must be no mistake, we leave le Havre together, I suppose? I am to be your secretary, since this little chap, who thinks I am drunk, and is laughing at me, is going to leave you.—Go ahead. March!—and leave him to marry the girl."

Canalis went to dress.

“Not a word; he is rushing on suicide,” said Butscha, as cool as Gobenheim, to La Brière, very quietly; and he telegraphed behind Canalis a signal of scorn familiar to the Paris street boy. “Good-by, Master,” he went on at the top of his voice, “may I go and get forty winks in Madame Amaury’s summer-house?”

“Make yourself at home,” replied the poet.

The clerk, loudly laughed at by Canalis’ three servants, made his way to the summer-house, plunging into flower-beds and baskets with the perverse grace of an insect describing its endless zigzags as it tries to escape through a closed window. He scrambled up into the gazebo, and when the servants had got indoors, he sat down on a wooden bench and gave himself up to the joys of triumph. He had fooled the superior man; not only had he snatched off his mask, but he had seen him untie the strings, and he laughed as an author laughs at his piece, with a full appreciation of the value of this *vis comica*.

“Men are tops!” cried he; “you have only to find the end of the string that is wound round them. Why, anyone could make me faint away by simply saying, ‘Mademoiselle Modeste has fallen off her horse and broken her leg.’”

A few minutes later, Modeste, wearing a bewitching habit of dark-green kerseymere, a little hat with a green veil, doerskin gloves, and velvet boots, over which the lace frills of her drawers fell gracefully, had mounted her handsomely-saddled pony, and was showing to her father and the Duc d’Hérouville the pretty gift she had just received; she was delighted with it, seeing in it one of those attentions which most flatter a woman.

“Was it you, Monsieur le Duc?” said she, holding out the sparkling end of her whip. “There was a card on it with the words, ‘Guess if you can,’ and a row of dots. Françoise and Madame Dumay ascribe this charming surprise to Butscha; but my dear Butscha is not rich enough to pay for such fine rubies! And my father, on my saying on Sunday evening that I had no whip, sent for that one from Rouen.”

Modeste pointed to a whip in her father's hand with a handle set closely with turquoises, a fashionable novelty then, but now rather common.

"I only wish, Mademoiselle—I would give ten years of my life to have the right of offering such a magnificent jewel," replied the Duke politely.

"Ah! then here is the audacious man," cried Modeste, seeing Canalis come up on horseback. "None but a poet can find such exquisite things.—Monsieur," she went on to Melchior, "my father will be angry with you; you are justifying those who blame you for your extravagance."

"Hah!" cried Canalis simply, "then that is what took La Brière from le Havre to Paris as fast as he could ride."

"Your secretary took such a liberty!" said Modeste, turning pale, and flinging the whip to Françoise Cochet with a vehemence expressive of the deepest contempt. "Give me back that whip, father!"

"The poor boy is lying on his bed broken with fatigue!" Melchior went on, as they followed the girl, who had gone off at a gallop. "You are hard, Mademoiselle. 'I have this chance alone of reminding her of my existence,' was what he said."

"And could you esteem a woman who was capable of preserving keepsakes from every comer?" said Modeste.

Modeste, who was surprised at receiving no reply from Canalis, ascribed his inattention to the sound of the horse's hoofs.

"How you delight in tormenting those who are in love with you!" said the Duke. "Your pride and dignity so entirely belie your vagaries that I am beginning to suspect that you do yourself injustice by deliberately planning your malicious tricks."

"What! you have just discovered that, Monsieur le Duc?" said she, with a laugh. "You have exactly as much insight as a husband!"

For about a kilometer they rode on in silence. Modeste was surprised at being no longer aware of the flaming glances of Canalis, whose admiration for the beauties of the landscape seemed rather more than was natural. On the preceding

evening Modeste had pointed out to the poet a beautiful effect of color in the sunset over the sea, and, finding him as speechless as a mute, had said—

“Well, do not you see it all?”

“I see nothing but your hand,” he had replied.

“Does Monsieur de la Brière know how to ride?” Modeste asked, to pique him.

“He is not a very good horseman, but he goes,” replied the poet, as cold as Gobenheim had been before the Colonel’s return.

As they went along a cross-road, down which Monsieur Mignon turned to go through a pretty valley to a hill overlooking the course of the Seine, Canalis let Modeste and the Duke go forward, slacking his speed so as to bring his horse side by side with the Colonel’s.

“Monsieur le Comte,” said he, “you are a frank soldier, so you will regard my openness as a claim to your esteem. When an offer of marriage, with all the too barbarous, or, if you will, too civilized discussions to which it gives rise, is made through a third person, everyone suffers. You and I are both men of perfect discretion, and you, like me, are past the age for surprises, so let us speak as man to man.—I will set the example. I am nine-and-twenty, I have no landed estate, I am an ambitious man. That I ardently admire Mademoiselle Modeste you must have seen. Now, in spite of the faults your charming daughter delights in affecting——”

“To say nothing of those she really has,” said the Colonel, smiling.

“I should be glad indeed to make her my wife, and I believe I could make her happy. The whole question of my future life turns on the point of fortune. Every girl who is open to marriage must be loved whatever comes of it; at the same time, you are not the man to get rid of your dear Modeste without a portion, and my position would no more allow of my marrying ‘for love,’ as the phrase is, than of my proposing to a girl without a fortune at least equal to my own. My salary, and some sinecures, with what I get from the Academy and my writings, come to about thirty thousand francs a year, a fine income for a bachelor. If my wife and

I between us have sixty thousand francs a year, I could continue to live on much the same footing as at present. Have you a million francs to give Mademoiselle Modeste?"

"Oh! Monsieur, we are very far from any agreement," said the Colonel jesuitically.

"Well, then, we have said nothing about the matter—only whistled," said Canalis anxiously. "You will be quite satisfied with my conduct, Monsieur le Comte; I shall be one more of the unfortunate men crushed by that charming young lady. Give me your word that you will say nothing of this to anybody, not even to Mademoiselle Modeste; for," he added, by way of consolation, "some change might occur in my position which would allow of my asking her hand without a settlement."

"I swear it," said the Colonel. "You know, Monsieur, with what exaggerated language the public, in the provinces as in Paris, talk of fortunes made and lost. Success and failure are alike magnified, and we are never so lucky or so unlucky as report says. In business there is no real security but investment in land when cash transactions are settled. I am awaiting with anxious impatience the reports of my various agents; nothing is as yet concluded—neither the sale of my merchandise and my ship, nor my account with China. I shall not for the next ten months know the amount of my capital. However, in Paris, when talking to Monsieur de la Brière, I guaranteed a settlement on my daughter of two hundred thousand francs in money down. I intend to purchase a landed estate and settle it in tail on my grand-children, obtaining for them a grant of my titles and coat-of-arms."

After the first words of this speech Canalis had ceased to listen.

The four riders now came out on a wide road and rode abreast up to the plateau, which commands a view of the rich valley of the Seine towards Rouen, while on the other horizon they could still see the line of the sea.

"Butscha was indeed right, God is a great landscape maker," said Canalis, as he looked down on the panorama, unique among those for which the hills above the Seine are justly famous.

"But it is when out hunting, my dear Baron," said the Duke, "when nature is roused by a voice, by a stir in the silence, that the scenery, as we fly past, seems most really sublime with the rapid change of effect."

"The sun has an inexhaustible palette," said Modeste, gazing at the poet in a sort of bewilderment. On her making a remark as to the absence of mind she observed in Canalis, he replied that he was reveling in his own thoughts, an excuse which writers can make in addition to those common to other men.

"Are we really blest when we transfer our life to the center of the world, and add to it a thousand factitious needs and over-wrought vanities?" said Modeste, as she contemplated the calm and luxuriant champaign which seemed to counsel philosophical quietude.

"Such bucolics, Mademoiselle, are always written on tables of gold," said the poet.

"And imagined, perhaps, in a garret," replied the Colonel.

Modeste gave Canalis a piercing look, and saw him flinch; there was a sound of bells in her ears; for a moment everything grew dark before her; then, in a hard, cold tone, she exclaimed—

"Ah! it is Wednesday!"

"It is not with the idea of flattering a merely transient fancy of yours, Mademoiselle," said the Duc d'Hérouville solemnly—for this little scene, so tragical to Modeste, had given him time for thought—"but, I assure you, I am so utterly disgusted with the world, the Court, and Paris life, that, for my part, with a Duchesse d'Hérouville so full of charms and wit as you are, I could pledge myself to live like a philosopher in my château, doing good to those about me, reclaiming my alluvial flats, bringing up my children——"

"This shall be set down to your credit, Duke," said Modeste, looking steadily at the noble gentleman. "You flatter me," she added, "for you do not think me frivolous, and you believe that I have enough resources in myself to live in solitude.—And that perhaps will be my fate," she added, looking at Canalis with a compassionate expression.

"It is the lot of all small fortunes," replied the poet.

"Paris requires Babylonian luxury. I sometimes wonder how I have managed to live till now."

"The King is Providence to you and me," said the Duke frankly, "for we both live on His Majesty's bounty. If, since the death of Monsieur le Grand, as Cinq-Mars was called, we had not always held office in our family, we should have had to sell Hérouvillè to be demolished by the *Bande Noire*. Believe me, Mademoiselle, it is to me a terrible humiliation to mix up financial considerations with the thought of marriage——"

The candor of this avowal, which came from the heart, and the sincerity of this regret, touched Modeste.

"In these days," said the poet, "nobody in France, Monsieur le Duc, is rich enough to commit the folly of marrying a woman for her personal merits, her charm, her character, or her beauty——"

The Colonel looked at Canalis with a strange expression, after studying his daughter, whose face no longer expressed any astonishment.

"Then for a man of honor," he said, "it is a noble use of riches to devote them to repair the ravages that time has wrought on our old historical families."

"Yes, papa," said the girl gravely.

The Colonel asked the Duke and Canalis to dine at the villa, without ceremony, in their riding dress, and set them the example by not changing his for dinner. When, on their return, Modeste went to change her dress, she looked curiously at the trinket that had come from Paris, and that she had so cruelly disdained.

"How exquisitely such work is done nowadays," said she to Françoise Cochet, who was now her maid.

"And that poor young gentleman, Mademoiselle, ill of a fever——"

"Who told you so?"

"Monsieur Butscha. He came here just now to bid me say you had no doubt found out that he had kept his word on the day he named."

Modeste went downstairs, dressed with queenly simplicity.

"My dear father," said she, quite audibly, taking the

Colonel's arm, "will you go and ask after Monsieur de la Brière, and oblige me by taking back his present. You may put it to him that my small fortune, as well as my own taste, prohibits my using such toys as are fit only for a queen or a courtesan. Besides, I can only accept presents from the man I may hope to marry. Beg your excellent young friend to keep the whip till you find yourself rich enough to buy it of him."

"Then my little girl is full of good sense!" said the Colonel, kissing her on the forehead.

Canalis took advantage of a conversation between the Duc d'Hérouville and Madame Mignon to go out on the terrace, where Modeste presently joined him, urged by curiosity, while he believed it was by her desire to become Madame Canalis. Somewhat alarmed at his own audacity in thus executing what a soldier would call "right about face," though, according to the jurisprudence of ambitious souls, every man in his place would have done the same, and just as suddenly, he tried to find some plausible reason as he saw the ill-starred Modeste come out to him.

"Dear Modeste," said he, in insinuating tones, "as we are on such terms of friendship, will you be offended if I point out to you how painful your replies with regard to Monsieur d'Hérouville must be to a man who loves you, and, above all, to a poet, whose soul is a woman, is all nerves, and suffering from the myriad jealousies of a genuine passion. I should be a poor diplomat indeed if I had not understood that your preliminary flirtations, your elaborate recklessness, were the outcome of a plan to study our characters——"

Modeste raised her head with a quick, intelligent, and pretty movement, of a type that may perhaps be traced to certain animals to which instinct gives wonderful grace.

"And so, thrown back on myself, I was no longer deceived by them. I marveled at your subtle wit, in harmony with your character and your countenance. Be satisfied that I never imagined your assumed duplicity to be anything but an outer wrapper, covering the most adorable candor. No, your intelligence, your learning, have left untainted the exquisite innocence we look for in a wife. You are the very

wife for a poet, a diplomatist, a thinker, a man fated to live through hazardous moments, and I admire you as much as I feel attached to you. I entreat you, unless you were merely playing with me yesterday when you accepted the pledges of a man whose vanity will turn to pride if he is chosen by you, whose faults will turn to virtues at your divine touch—I beseech you, do not crush the feeling he has indulged till it is a vice!

“Jealousy in me is a solvent, and you have shown me what its violence is; it is fearful; it eats into everything! Oh! it is not the jealousy of Othello!” said he, in reply to a movement on Modeste’s part. “No, no! I myself am in question; I am spoilt in this regard. You know of the one affection to which I owe the only form of happiness I have ever known—and that very incomplete [he shook his head].

“Love is depicted as a child by every nation, because it cannot be conceived of but as having all life before it. Well, this love of mine had its term fixed by nature; it was still-born. The most intuitive motherliness discerned and soothed this aching spot in my heart, for a woman who feels—who sees—that she is dying to the joys of love, has angelic consideration; the Duchess has never given me a pang of that kind. In ten years not a word, not a look, has failed of its mark. I attach more importance than ordinary people do to words, thoughts, and looks. To me a glance is an infinite possession, the slightest doubt is a mortal poison, and acts instantaneously: I cease to love. In my opinion—which is opposed to that of the vulgar, who revel in trembling, hoping, waiting—love ought to dwell in absolute assurance, childlike, infinite. To me the enchanting purgatory which women delight in inflicting on us with their caprices is an intolerable form of happiness which I will have nothing to say to; to me, love is heaven or hell. Hell I will not have; I feel that I am strong enough to endure the sempiternal blue of Paradise. I give myself unreservedly, I will have no secrets, no doubts, no delusions, in my future life, and I ask for reciprocity. Perhaps I offend you by doubting you! But, remember, I am speaking only of myself——”

“And a great deal,” said Modeste, hurt by all the lancet

points of this harangue, in which the Duchesse de Chaulieu was used as a sledge-hammer, "but it can never be too much; I have a habit of admiring you, my dear poet."

"Well, then, can you promise me the dog-like fidelity I offer you? Is it not fine? Is it not what you wish for?"

"But why, my dear poet, do you not look for a wife who is dumb and blind and something of a fool? I am quite prepared to please my husband in all things; but you threaten to deprive a girl of the very happiness you promise her, to snatch it from her at the slightest movement, the slightest word, the slightest look! You cut the bird's wings and want to see it fly! I knew that poets were accused of inconsistency—Oh! quite unjustly," she added, as Canalis protested by a gesture, "for the supposed fault is merely the result of a vulgar misapprehension of the suddenness of their impulses. Still, I had not thought that a man of genius would devise the contradictory conditions of such a game, and then call it life! You insist on the impossibilities just to have the pleasure of putting me in the wrong, like those enchanters who in fairy tales set tasks to persecuted damsels whom good fairies rescue——"

"In this case true love will be the fairy," said Canalis, rather dryly, seeing that his motive for a separation had been detected by the acute and delicate intelligence which Butscha had put on the scent.

"You, at this moment, my dear poet, are like those parents who inquire as to a girl's fortune before mentioning what their son's will be. You make difficulties with me, not knowing whether you have any right to do so. Love cannot be based on agreements discussed in cold blood. The poor Duke allows himself to be managed with all the submissiveness of Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel, with this difference, that I am not the widow Wadman, though bereaved at this moment of many illusions concerning poetry.—Yes! we hate to believe anything, we girls, that can overthrow our world of fancy!—I had been told all this beforehand!—Oh! you are trying to quarrel with me in a way unworthy of you! I cannot recognize the Melchior of yesterday."

“Because Melchior has detected in you an ambition you still cherish——”

Modeste looked at Canalis from head to foot with an imperial glance.

“But I shall some day be an ambassador and a peer as he is——”

“You take me for a vulgar schoolgirl!” she said, as she went up the steps. But she turned hastily, and added in some confusion, for she felt suffocating——

“That is less insolent than taking me for a fool. The change in your demeanor is due to the nonsense current in le Havre, which Françoise, my maid, has just repeated to me.”

“Oh, Modeste, can you believe that?” cried Canalis, with theatrical emphasis. “Then you think that I want to marry you only for your fortune!”

“If I do you this injustice after your edifying remarks on the hills by the Seine, it lies with you to undeceive me, and thenceforth I will be what you would wish me to be,” said she, blighting him with her scorn.

“If you think you can catch me in that trap, my lady,” said the poet to himself as he followed her, “you fancy me younger than I am. What an ado, to be sure, for a little slut for whose esteem I care no more than for that of the King of Borneo. However, by ascribing to me an ignoble motive she justifies my present attitude. Isn’t she cunning? —La Brière will be saddled, like the little fool that he is; and five years hence we shall laugh at him well, she and I.”

The coolness produced by this dispute between Modeste and Canalis was obvious to all eyes that evening. Canalis withdrew early, on the pretext of La Brière’s illness, leaving the field free to the Master of the Horse. At about eleven Butscha, who had come to escort Madame Latournelle home, said in an undertone to Modeste——

“Was I right?”

“Alas, yes!” said she.

“But have you done as we agreed, and left the door ajar so that he may return?”

“My anger was too much for me,” replied Modeste.

"Such meanness brought the blood to my head, and I told him my mind!"

"Well, so much the better! When you have quarreled so that you cannot speak civilly to each other, even then I undertake to make him so devoted and pressing that you yourself are taken in by him."

"Come, come, Butscha; he is a great poet, a gentleman, and a man of intellect."

"Your father's eight millions will be more than all that."

"Eight millions!" said Modeste.

"My master, who is selling his business, is setting out for Provence to look into Castagnould's investments as your father's agent. The sum-total of the contracts for repurchasing the lands of la Bastie amounts to four millions of francs, and your father has consented to every item. Your settlement is to be two millions, and the Colonel allows one for establishing you in Paris with a house and furniture. Calculate."

"Ah, then I may be Duchesse d'Hérouville," said Modeste, looking at Butscha.

"But for that ridiculous Canalis, you would have kept *his* whip, as sent by me," said Butscha, putting in a word for La Brière.

"Monsieur Butscha, do you really expect me to marry the man you may choose?" said Modeste, laughing.

"That worthy young fellow loves as truly as I do; you loved him yourself for a week, and he is a man of genuine heart," replied the clerk.

"And can he compare with a Crown appointment, do you think? There are but six—the High Almoner, the Chancellor, the Lord Chamberlain, the Master of the Horse, the High Constable, the High Admiral.—But there are no more Lords High Constable."

"But in six months, Mademoiselle, the people, composed of an infinite number of malignant Butschas, may blow upon all this grandeur. Besides, what does nobility matter in these days? There are not a thousand real noblemen in France. The d'Hérouvilles are descended from an Usher of the Rod under Robert of Normandy. You will have many a vexa-

tion from those two knife-faced old maids.—If you are bent on being a Duchess—well, you belong to Franche Comté, the Pope will have at least as much consideration for you as for the tradespeople, he will sell you a duchy ending in *nia* or *agno*.—Do not trifle with your happiness for the sake of a Crown appointment!”

The reflections indulged in by Canalis during the night were all satisfactory. He could imagine nothing in the world worse than the situation of a married man without a fortune. Still tremulous at the thought of the danger he had been led into by his vanity, which he had pledged, as it were, to Modeste by his desire to triumph over the Duc d'Hérerville, and by his belief in Monsieur Mignon's millions, he began to wonder what the Duchesse de Chaulieu must be thinking of his stay at le Havre, aggravated by five days' cessation from letter-writing, whereas in Paris they wrote each other four or five notes a week.

“And the poor woman is struggling to get me promoted to be Commander of the Legion of Honor, and to the place of Minister to the Grand Duchy of Baden!” cried he.

Forthwith, with the prompt decisiveness which in poets, as in speculators, is the result of a clear intuition of the future, he sat down and wrote the following letter:—

To Madame la Duchesse de Chaulieu.

“MY DEAR ÉLÉONORE,—You are no doubt astonished at having had no news of me, but my stay here is not merely a matter of health; I also have had to do my duty in some degree to our little friend La Brière. The poor boy has fallen desperately in love with a certain Demoiselle Modeste de la Bastie, a little pale-faced, insignificant thread-paper of a girl, who, by the way, has as a vice a mania for literature, and calls herself poetical to justify the whims, the tantrums, and changes of a pretty bad temper. You know Ernest, he is so easily made a fool of, that I would not trust him alone. Mademoiselle de la Bastie set up a strange flirtation with your Melchior; she was very well inclined to be your rival, though she has lean arms and scraggy shoul-

ders, like most young girls, hair more colorless than Madame de Rochefide's, and a very doubtful expression in her little gray eye. I pulled up this Immodeste's advances pretty short—perhaps rather too roughly; but that is the way of an absorbing passion. What do I care for all the women on earth, who, all put together, are not worth you?

“The people with whom we spend our time, who surround this heiress, are *bourgeois* enough to make one sick. Pity me; I spend my evenings with notaries' clerks, their wives, their cashiers, and a provincial money-lender; wide indeed is the gulf between this and the evenings in the Rue de Grenelle. The father's trumped-up fortune—he has just come home from China—has secured us the company of that omnipresent suitor the Master of the Horse, hungrier for millions than ever, since it will cost six or seven, they say, to reclaim and work the much-talked-of alluvion of Hérouville. The King has no idea what a fatal gift he has made to the little Duke. His Grace, who does not suspect how small a fortune his hoped-for father-in-law possesses, is jealous only of me. La Brière is making his way with his idol under cover of his friend, who serves as a screen.

“In spite of Ernest's raptures, I, the poet, think of the substantial; and the information I have gathered as to the gentleman's wealth casts a gloomy hue over our secretary's prospects, for his lady-love has sharp enough teeth to eat a hole in any fortune. Now, if my angel would redeem some of our sins, she would try to find out the truth about this matter, by sending for her banker, Mongenod, and cross-questioning him with the skill that distinguishes her. Monsieur Charles Mignon, formerly a Colonel in the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard, has for seven years been in constant communication with Mongenod's house. They talk here of two hundred thousand francs in settlement, at most; and before making an offer in form for the young lady on Ernest's behalf, I should be glad to have positive data. As soon as the good folks are agreed, I return to Paris. I know a way of bringing the business to a satisfactory conclusion for our lover. All that is needed is to secure permission for Monsieur Mignon's son-in-law to take his title of Count, and no

man is more likely to obtain such a grant than Ernest, in view of his services, especially when seconded by us three—you, the Duke, and myself. With his tastes, Ernest, who will undoubtedly rise to be a Master of the Exchequer, will be perfectly happy living in Paris if he is certain of twenty-five thousand francs a year, a permanent office, and a wife—poor wretch!

“Oh, my dear! how I long to see the Rue de Grenelle again! A fortnight’s absence, when it does not kill love, revives the ardor of its early days, and you know, better perhaps than I, all the reasons that make my love eternal. My bones in the tomb will love you still! Indeed, I cannot hold out! If I am compelled to remain ten days longer, I must go to Paris for a few hours.

“Has the Duke got me rope to hang myself? And you, dear life, shall you have to take the Baden waters this season? The cooing of our *beau ténébreux*, as compared with the accents of happy love—always the same, and true to itself for nearly ten years past—has given me a deep contempt of marriage; I had never seen all this so close to my eyes before. Ah! my dear, what is called wrongdoing is a far closer tie between two souls than the law—is it not?”

This idea served as the text for two pages of reminiscences and of aspirations of too private a nature for publication.

On the day before Canalis posted this letter, Butscha, who wrote under the name of Jean Jacmin to his imaginary cousin Philoxène, had sent off his answer twelve hours in advance of the poet’s letter. The Duchess, for the last fortnight extremely alarmed and offended by Melchior’s silence, had dictated Philoxène’s letter to her cousin; and now, after reading the clerk’s reply—somewhat too decisive for the vanity of a lady of fifty—had made minute inquiries as to Colonel Mignon’s fortune. Finding herself betrayed, deserted for money, Éléonore gave herself up to a paroxysm of rage, hatred, and cold malignancy. Philoxène, knocking at the door of her mistress’s luxurious room, on going in, found her with tears in her eyes, and stood amazed at this unprecedented phenomenon, which she had never before seen during fifteen years of service.

"We expiate the happiness of ten years in ten minutes!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"A letter from le Havre, Madame."

Éléonore read Canalis' effusion of prose without observing Philoxène's presence, and the maid's surprise was heightened as she saw the Duchess's face recover its serenity as she read the letter. If you hold out to a drowning man a pole as thick as a walking stick, he will regard it as the king's highway to safety; and so the happy Éléonore believed in the poet's good faith as she perused these sheets in which love and business, lies and truth,肘bowed each other.

Just now, when the banker had left her, she had sent for her husband to hinder Melchior's promotion if there were time yet; but a generous regret came over her that rose to a sublime impulse.

"Poor boy!" thought she, "he has not the smallest thought of ill. He loves me as he did the first day; he tells me everything.—Philoxène!" said she, noticing her head maid loitering about, and affecting to arrange the toilet-table.

"Madame la Duchesse?"

"My hand-glass, child."

Éléonore looked at herself, noted the razor-fine lines grooving her forehead, but invisible at a distance; and she sighed, for she believed that in that sigh she was taking leave of love. Then she had a man's thought, above the pettiness of woman—a thought which is sometimes intoxicating; an intoxication which may perhaps account for the clemency of the Semiramis of the North when she made her young and lovely rival Momonoff's wife.

"Since he has not failed me, I will get the millions and the girl for him," thought she, "if this little Mademoiselle Mignon is as plain as he says she is."

Three knocks, delicately rapped out, announced the Duke, for whom his wife herself opened the door.

"Ah! you are better, my dear," cried he, with the assumed gladness that courtiers so well know how to put on, and by which simpletons are taken in.

"My dear Henri," said she, "it is really inconceivable that you should not by this time have secured Melchior's

appointment, after sacrificing yourself for the King during your year's ministry, knowing that it would scarcely endure so long!"

The Duke glanced at Philoxène; and the maid, by an almost imperceptible jerk of the head, showed him the letter from le Havre on the dressing-table. "You would be bored to death in Germany, and quarrel with Melchior before your return," said the Duke artlessly.

"Why?"

"Well, would you not always be together?" replied the erewhile Ambassador with comical candor.

"Oh! no," said she; "I mean to get him married."

"If d'Hérouville is to be believed, our dear Canalis has not waited for your good offices," replied the Duke, smiling. "Grandlieu yesterday read me some passages of a letter to him from the Master of the Horse, which was no doubt edited by his aunt to come to your ears; for Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, always on the look-out for a fortune, knows that Grandlieu and I play whist together almost every evening. That good little d'Hérouville invites the Prince de Cadignan to a Royal Hunt in Normandy, begging him to persuade the King to go, so as to turn the damsel's head when she finds herself the object of such a chivalrous procession. In fact, two words from Charles X. would settle everything. D'Hérouville says the girl is incomparably lovely."

"Henri, let us go to le Havre!" cried the Duchess, interrupting her husband.

"But on what excuse?" said he gravely—a man who had been in the intimate confidence of Louis XVIII.

"I never saw a hunt."

"That would be all very well if the King should be there, but to go so far for a hunt would be ridiculous; and he will not go, I have just spoken to him about it."

"MADAME perhaps would go——"

"That is a better plan," said the Duke; "and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse may help you to get her away from Rosny. Then the King would make no objection to his hounds being taken out.—But do not go to le Havre, my dear," said the Duke, in a paternal tone; "it would make you conspicuous.

Look here; this, I think, will be a better plan. Gaspard has his Château of Rosembray on the further side of the forest of Brotonne; why not give him a hint to receive all the party there?"

"Through whom?"

"Why, his wife the Duchess, who attends the Holy Table with Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, might ask Gaspard to do it if the old maid hinted it to her."

"You are the dearest man!" said Éléonore. "I will write two lines to the old lady, and to Diane; for we must have hunting-suits made. The little hat, now I think of it, makes one look very much younger.—Did you win yesterday at the English Embassy?"

"Yes," said the Duke; "I wiped out my score."

"And, above all, Henri, set everything aside till Melchior's two promotions are settled."

After writing a few lines to the fair Diane de Maufrigneuse, and a note to Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, Éléonore flung this reply like the smack of a horse-whip across Canalis' lies:—

To Monsieur le Baron de Canalis.

"MY DEAR POET,—Mademoiselle de la Bastie is beautiful; Mongenod assures me that her father has eight millions of francs; I had thought of making her your wife, so I am deeply annoyed by your want of confidence in me. If before you started for le Havre, you aimed at getting La Brière married to her, I cannot imagine your not telling me so plainly before you went. And why pass a fortnight without writing a line to a friend so easily alarmed as I am?"

"Your letter came a little late; I had already seen the banker. You are a child, Melchior; you try to be cunning with us. That is not right. Even the Duke is amazed at your behavior; he thinks you not quite gentlemanly—which casts a doubt on the virtue of your lady mother.

"Now, I want to see things for myself. I shall, I believe, have the honor of attending MADAME to the hunt arranged by the Duc d'Hérouville for Mademoiselle de la Bastie. I will contrive that you shall be invited to stay at Rosembray,

as the hunt will probably take place at the Duc de Verneuil's.

"Believe me, none the less, my dear poet, your friend for life,
ÉLÉONORE."

"There, Ernest," said Canalis, tossing this letter, which arrived at breakfast time, across the table in La Brière's face. "That is the two thousandth love-letter I have received from that woman, and there is not one single *tu*. The noble Éléonore never compromised herself further than what you find there.—Get married, and make haste about it! The worst marriage in the world is more tolerable than the lightest of these halters.—Well, I am the veriest Nicodemus that ever dropped from the moon. Modeste has millions; she is lost to me forever; for no one ever comes back from the poles, where we now are, to the tropics where we dwelt three days ago! Besides, I have all the more reason to wish for your triumph over the little Duke, because I told the Duchesse de Chaulieu that I came here only for your sake; so now I shall work for you."

"Alas! Melchior, Modeste must need have so superior, so mature a character, and such a noble mind, to resist the spectacle of the Court, and all the splendor so skillfully displayed in her honor and glory by the Duke, that I cannot believe in the existence of such perfection; and yet—if she is still the Modeste of her letters, there may be a hope——"

"You are a happy fellow, young Boniface, to see the world and your lady-love through such green spectacles!" exclaimed Canalis, going out to walk in the garden.

The poet, caught between two falsehoods, could not make up his mind what to do next.

"Play the game by the rules, and you lose!" cried he, as he sat in the summer-house. "Every man of sense would undoubtedly have acted as I did four days ago, and have crept out of the trap in which I found myself. For in such a case you don't wait to untie the knots; you break through everything!—Come, I must be cold, calm, dignified, hurt. Honor will not allow of any other demeanor. English rigidity is the only way to recover Modeste's respect. After all, if I only get out of the scrape by falling back on my

old felicity, my ten years' fidelity will be rewarded. Éléonore will find me a suitable match."

The hunt was destined to be the rallying point of all the passions brought into play by the Colonel's fortune and his daughter's beauty. There was a sort of truce among the contending parties during the few days needed to prepare this solemn act of forestry; the drawing-room in the Villa Mignon had the peaceful appearance of a very united family party. Canalis, intrenched in his part of a much-injured man, made a display of courtesy; he put aside his pretentiousness, gave no more specimens of oratorical talent, and was charming, as clever men are when they shed their affectations. He discussed the money-market with Gobenheim, war with the Colonel, Germany with Madame Mignon, and house-keeping with Madame Latournelle, trying to win them over to La Brière. The Duc d'Hérouville frequently left the field free to the two friends, as he was obliged to go to Rosembray to consult the Duc de Verneuil and superintend the execution of the orders issued by the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan.

Meanwhile, the comic element was not lacking. Modeste found herself between the disparagement Canalis tried to cast on the Duke's gallant attentions, and the exaggerated views of the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, who came every evening. Canalis pointed out to Modeste that, far from being the heroine of the day, she would be scarcely noticed. MADAME would be attended by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the daughter-in-law of the Master of the Hounds, by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, and some other ladies of the Court, and among them a mere girl would produce no sensation. Some officers would, no doubt, be invited from the garrison at Rouen, etc. Hélène was never tired of repeating to the girl, whom she looked upon as her sister-in-law, that she would, of course, be presented to MADAME; that the Duc de Verneuil would certainly invite her and her father to stay at Rosembray; that if the Colonel had any favor to ask of the King—such as a peerage—this would be an unique opportunity, for they did not despair of getting the King there

on the third day; that she would be surprised at the charming reception she would meet with from the handsomest women of the Court, the Duchesses de Chaulieu, de Maufriqueuse, de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, etc.; Modeste's prejudices against the Faubourg Saint-Germain would disappear—and so forth, and so forth. It was a most amusing little warfare, with its marches and counter marches and strategy, which the Dumays, the Latournelles, Gobenheim and Butscha looked on at, and enjoyed, saying among themselves all manner of hard things about the nobility, as they watched their elaborate, cruel, and studied meanness.

The assurances of the d'Hérouville faction were justified by an invitation, in the most flattering terms, from the Duc de Verneuil and the Master of the King's Hounds to Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie and his daughter to be present at a Royal Hunt at Rosembray on the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th of November.

La Brière, oppressed by gloomy presentiments, reveled in Modeste's presence in that spirit of concentrated avidity whose bitter joys are known only to lovers irrevocably and forever discarded. The flashes of happiness in his inmost self, mingled with melancholy reflections on the same theme, "She is lost to me!" made the poor youth a pathetic spectacle, all the more touching because his countenance and person were in harmony with this depth of feeling. There is nothing more poetical than such a living elegy that has eyes, that walks, and sighs without rhyming.

Finally, the Duc d'Hérouville came to arrange for Modeste's journey. After crossing the Seine, she was to proceed in the Duke's traveling carriage with his aunt and sister. The Duke was perfect in his courtesy; he invited Canalis and La Brière, telling them, as he told Monsieur Mignon, that they would find hunters at their service.

The Colonel asked his daughter's three lovers to breakfast on the day of the departure. Then Canalis tried to execute a scheme that had ripened in his mind during the last few days—namely, to reconquer Modeste, and to trick the Duchess, the Master of the Horse, and La Brière. A graduate in diplomacy could not remain bogged in such a

position as that in which he found himself. La Brière, on his part, had made up his mind to bid Modeste an eternal farewell. Thus each suitor, as he foresaw the conclusion of a struggle that had been going on for three weeks, proposed to put in a last word, like a pleader to the judge before sentence is pronounced.

After dinner the day before, the Colonel took his daughter by the arm and impressed on her the necessity for coming to a decision.

"Our position with the d'Hérouville family would be intolerable at Rosembray. Do you want to be a duchess?" he asked Modeste.

"No, father," she replied.

"Then do you really love Canalis——?"

"Certainly not, papa; a thousand times, no!" said she, with childish irritability.

The Colonel looked at her with a sort of glee.

"Ah! I have not influenced you," cried the kind father. "But I may tell you now that even in Paris I had chosen my son-in-law when, on my impressing on him that I had no fortune, he threw his arms round me, saying that I had lifted a hundredweight from his heart."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Modeste, coloring.

"Of the man of solid virtues and sound morals," said he, mockingly repeating the phrase which, on the day of his return, had scattered Modeste's dreams.

"Oh, I am not thinking of him, papa! Leave me free to refuse the Duke myself; I know him, I know how to soothe him——"

"Then your choice is made?"

"Not yet. I still have to guess a few syllables in the riddle of my future; but after having had a glimpse of the Court, I will tell you all my secret at Rosembray."

"You will join the hunt, will you not?" said the Colonel to Ernest, whom he saw coming down the path where he was walking with Modeste.

"No, Colonel," replied Ernest. "I have come to take leave of you and of Mademoiselle. I am going back to Paris."

"You have no curiosity?" said Modeste, interrupting him, and looking at the bashful youth.

"Nothing is needed to keep me," said he, "but the expression of a wish I hardly hope for."

"If that is all, it will give me pleasure, at any rate," said the Colonel, as he went forward to meet Canalis, leaving his daughter alone for a moment with the hapless Ernest.

"Mademoiselle," said the young man, looking up at her with the courage of despair; "I have a petition to make."

"To me?"

"Let me depart forgiven! My life can never be happy; I must endure the remorse of having lost my happiness, by my own fault no doubt; but at least——"

"Before we part forever," replied Modeste, interrupting him *à la* Canalis, "I want to know one thing only; and though you once assumed a disguise, I do not think that you will now be such a coward as to deceive me——"

At the word "coward" Ernest turned pale.

"You are merciless!" he exclaimed.

"Will you be frank with me?"

"You have the right to ask me such a humiliating question," said he, in a voice made husky by the violent beating of his heart.

"Well, then, did you read my letters out to Monsieur de Canalis?"

"No, Mademoiselle; and though I gave them to the Colonel to read, it was only to justify my love, by showing him how my affection had had birth, and how genuine my efforts had been to cure you of your fancy."

"But what put this ignoble masquerading into your head?" she asked, with a kind of impatience.

La Brière related, in all its details, the scene to which Modeste's first letter had given rise, and the challenge which had resulted from Ernest's high opinion in favor of a young lady yearning for glory, as a plant strives for its share of the sunshine.

"Enough," said Modeste, concealing her agitation. "If you have not my heart, Monsieur, you have my highest esteem."

This simple speech made La Brière quite dizzy. He felt himself totter, and leaned against a shrub, like a man whose senses are failing him. Modeste, who had walked away, turned her head and hastily came back.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, taking him by the hand to save him from falling.

Modeste felt his hand like ice, and saw a face as white as a lily; all the blood had rushed to his heart.

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle,—I had fancied myself so despised——"

"Well," said she, with haughty scorn, "I did not say that I loved you."

And she again left La Brière, who, notwithstanding this hard speech, thought he was walking on the upper air. The earth felt soft beneath his feet, the trees seemed decked with flowers, the sky was rosy, and the air blue, as in the temples of Hymen at the close of a fairy drama that ends happily. In such circumstances, women are Janus-like, they see what is going on behind them without turning round; and Modeste saw in her lover's expression the unmistakable symptoms of a love such as Butscha's, which is beyond a doubt the *ne plus ultra* of a woman's desire. And the high value attached by La Brière to her esteem was to Modeste an infinitely sweet experience.

"Mademoiselle," said Canalis, leaving the Colonel, and coming to meet Modeste, "in spite of the small interest you take in my sentiments, it is a point of honor with me to wipe out a stain from which I have too long suffered. Here is what the Duchess wrote to me five days after my arrival here."

He made Modeste read the first few lines of the letter, in which the Duchess said that she had seen Mongenod, and wished that Melchior should marry Modeste; then having torn off the rest, he placed them in her hand.

"I cannot show you the remainder," said he, putting the paper in his pocket; "but I intrust these few lines to your delicacy, that you may be able to verify the handwriting. The girl who could ascribe to me such ignoble sentiments is quite capable of believing in some collusion, some stratagem. This may prove to you how much I care to convince you

that the difference between us was not based on the vilest interest on my part. Ah! Modeste," he went on, with tears in his voice, "your poet—Madame de Chaulieu's poet—has not less poetry in his heart than in his mind. You will see the Duchess; suspend your judgment of me till then." And he left Modeste quite disconcerted.

"On my word! They are all angels," said she to herself. "All too fine for marriage! Only the Duke is a human being."

"Mademoiselle Modeste, this hunt makes me very uneasy," said Butscha, appearing on the scene with a parcel under his arm. "I dreamed that your horse ran away with you, so I have been to Rouen to get you a Spanish snaffle; I have been told that a horse can never get it between his teeth. I implore you to use it; I have shown it to the Colonel, who has thanked me more than the thing is worth."

"Poor dear Butscha!" cried Modeste, touched to tears by this motherly care.

Butscha went off skipping like a man who has suddenly heard of the death of an old uncle leaving a fortune.

"My dear father," said Modeste, on returning to the drawing-room, "I should like very much to have that handsome whip; supposing you were to offer to exchange with Monsieur de la Brière—that whip for your picture by Ostade?"

Modeste cast a side glance at Ernest while the Colonel made this proposal, standing in front of the picture—the only thing he possessed as a memorial of the campaigns he had fought in; he had bought it of a citizen of Ratisbon. And seeing the eagerness with which Ernest rushed from the room, "He will attend the hunt," said she to herself.

Thus, strange to say, Modeste's three lovers all went to Rosembray with hearts full of hope, and enraptured by her adorable charms.

Rosembray, an estate recently purchased by the Duc de Verneuil with the money that fell to his share of the thousand million francs voted to legitimize the sale of national property, is remarkable for a château comparable for mag-

nificence with those of Mesnière and Balleroy. This noble and imposing mansion is reached by an immense avenue of ancestral elms four rows deep, and across a vast courtyard on a slope, like that of Versailles, with a splendid iron screen and two gate lodges, and surrounded by large orange trees in tubs. The façade to this *cour d'honneur* displays two stories of nineteen windows in each, between two wings at right angles—tall windows with small panes, set in carved stone arches, and separated by reeded pilasters. A cornice and balustrade screen an Italian roof, whence rise stone chimneys marked by trophies of arms, Rosembray having been built in the reign of Louis XIV. by a farmer-general named Cottin. The front towards the park differs from this, having a center block of five windows projecting from the main building, with columns and a noble pediment. The Marigny family, to whom the possessions of this Cottin came by marriage with his sole heiress, had a group representing Dawn executed for this pediment by Coysevox. Below it two genii support a scroll, on which this motto is inscribed in honor of the King, instead of the old family device: *Sol nobis benignus*. The great Louis had made a Duke of the Marquis de Marigny, one of his most insignificant favorites.

From the top of the semicircular double flight of steps there is a view over a large lake, as long and wide as the grand canal of Versailles, starting from the bottom of a slope of turf worthy of the most English lawn, its banks dotted with clumps displaying the brightest autumn flowers. Beyond, on each side, a French formal parterre spreads its squared beds and paths—pages written in the most majestic style of Le Nôtre. These two gardens are set in a border of wood and shrubbery, extending the whole length to the extent of thirty acres, and cleared in places in the English fashion under Louis XV. The view from the terrace is shut in beyond by a forest belonging to Rosembray, adjoining two demesnes, one belonging to the nation, and one to the Crown. It would be hard to find a more beautiful landscape.

Modeste's arrival caused some sensation in the avenue when the carriage was seen with the royal livery of France, escorted by the Master of the Horse, the Colonel, Canalis, and

La Brière, all riding, and preceded by an outrider in the Royal livery; behind them came ten servants, among them the Colonel's negro and mulatto, and his elegant britska, in which were the two ladies' maids and the luggage. The first carriage was drawn by four horses mounted by *tigers*, dressed with the spruce perfection insisted on by the Master of the Horse—often better served in such matters than the King himself.

Modeste, as she drove up and saw this minor Versailles, was dazzled by the magnificence of these great folk; she was suddenly conscious of having to meet these famous Duchesses; she dreaded seeming affected, provincial, or parvenu, lost her head completely, and repented of ever having wished for this hunting party.

When the carriage stopped, Modeste happily saw before her an old man in a fair, frizzy wig, with small curls, whose calm, smooth, full face wore a paternal smile and an expression of monastic joviality, to which a half downcast look lent something like dignity. The Duchess, a woman of deep devotion, the only daughter of a very wealthy President of the Supreme Court, who had died in 1800, was the mother of four children; very thin and erect, she bore some resemblance to Madame Latournelle, if imagination could be persuaded to embellish the lawyer's wife with the graces of a noble lady-Prioress.

"Ah! how do you do, dear Hortense?" said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, embracing the Duchess with all the sympathy that was a tie between these two proud spirits; "allow me to introduce to you and to our dear Duke, Mademoiselle de la Bastie, who is a little angel."

"We have heard so much about you, Mademoiselle," said the Duchess, "that we have been most eager to have you here."

"We can but regret our lost time," added the Duc de Verneuil, bowing with gallant admiration.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie," added the Master of the Horse, taking the Colonel by the arm, and leading him up to the Duke and Duchess with a tinge of respect in his tone and manner.

The Colonel bowed to the Duchess, the Duke gave him his hand.

"You are very welcome, Monsieur le Comte," said Monsieur de Verneuil. "You are the owner of many treasures," he added, glancing at Modeste.

The Duchess drew Modeste's hand through her arm and led her into a vast drawing-room, where half a score of women were sitting in groups round the fire. The men, led by the Duke, went to walk on the terrace, excepting only Canalis, who went in to pay his respects to the superb Éléonore. She, seated before a tapestry frame, was giving Mademoiselle de Verneuil some hints as to shading.

If Modeste had thrust her finger through with a needle when laying her hand on a cushion, she could not have felt a keener shock than she received from the icy glance, haughty and contemptuous, that the Duchesse de Chaulieu bestowed on her. From the first instant she saw no one but this woman, and guessed who she was. To know to what a pitch the cruelty can go of those sweet creatures who are exalted by our passion, women must be seen together. Modeste might have disarmed anyone but Éléonore by her amazed and involuntary admiration; for if she had not known her rival's age, she would have taken her to be a woman of six-and-thirty; but there were greater surprises in store for her!

The poet found himself flung against the wrath of a great lady. Such anger is the most ruthless Sphinx; the face is beaming, all else is savage. Even kings do not know how to reduce the stronghold of exquisitely cold politeness which a mistress can then hide under steel armor. The lovely woman's countenance smiles, and at the same time the steel strikes home: the hand is of steel, the arm, the body, all is steel. Canalis tried to clutch this steel, but his fingers slipped over it as his words slipped from her heart. And the gracious face, the gracious phrases, the gracious manners of the Duchess, concealed from every eye the steel of her cold fury—down to twenty-five degrees below zero. The sight of Modeste's supreme beauty, heightened by her journey, the appearance of the girl, as well dressed as Diane de

Maufrigneuse, had fired the powders that reflection had stored up in Éléonore's brain.

All the women had gone to the window to see the wonder of the day step out of the carriage, followed by her three lovers.

"Do not let us show that we are so curious," said Madame de Chaulieu, struck to the heart by Diane's exclamation, "She is divine! Where can such a creature have dropped from?"

And they had fled back to the drawing-room, where each one had composed her countenance, while the Duchesse de Chaulieu felt in her heart a thousand vipers all crying at once to be satisfied.

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville remarked in an undertone, and with marked meaning, to the Duchesse de Verneuil—

"Éléonore is not cordial in her reception of her great Melchior."

"The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse thinks that there is a coolness between them," replied Laure de Verneuil simply. This phrase, so often spoken in the world of fashion, is full of meaning. We feel in it the icy polar blast.

"Why?" asked Modeste of the charming girl who had left the Convent of the Sacred Heart not more than two months since.

"The great man," replied the Duchess, signing to her daughter to be silent, "left her for a fortnight without writing a word to her, after setting out for le Havre, and saying that he had gone for his health."

Modeste gave a little start which struck Laure, Hélène, and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"And meanwhile," the devout Duchess went on, "she was getting him appointed Commander of the Legion of Honor and Minister to Baden."

"Oh, it is very wrong of Canalis, for he owes everything to her," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"Why did not Madame de Chaulieu come to le Havre?" asked Modeste guilelessly of Hélène.

"My child," said the Duchesse de Verneuil, "she would let herself be killed without speaking a word. Look at her.

What a queen! With her head on the block she would still smile, like Mary Stuart—indeed, our handsome Éléonore has the same blood in her veins.”

“And she did not write to him?” said Modeste.

“Diane told me,” replied the Duchess, prompted to further confidences by an elbow nudge from Mademoiselle d’Hérouville, “that she had sent a very cutting answer to the first letter Canalis wrote to her about ten days ago.”

This statement made Modeste color with shame for Canalis; she longed not to crush him under her feet, but to revenge herself by a piece of mischief more cruel than a poniard thrust. She looked proudly at Madame de Chaulieu. That glance was gilded with eight millions of francs.

“Monsieur Melchior!” said she.

All the women looked up, first at the Duchess, who was talking to Canalis over the work-frame, then at this young girl, so ill bred as to disturb two lovers who were settling their quarrel—a thing which is never done in any rank of life.

Diane de Maufrigneuse gave her head a little toss, as much as to say, “The child is in her rights.”

Finally, the twelve women smiled at each other, for they were all jealous of a woman of fifty-six who was still handsome enough to dip her hand in the common treasury and steal a young woman’s share. Melchior glanced at Modeste with a feverish irritability, the hasty look of a master to a servant, while the Duchess bent her head with the air of a lioness interrupted at her meal; her eyes, fixed on the canvas, shot flames of fire, almost red-hot, at the poet while she sifted his very soul with her epigrams, for each sentence was a vengeance for a triple injury.

“Monsieur Melchior!” repeated Modeste, in a voice that asserted its right to be heard.

“What is it, Mademoiselle?” asked the poet.

He was obliged to rise, but he stood still halfway between the work-frame, which was near the window, and the fireplace, by which Modeste was sitting on the Duchesse de Verneuil’s sofa. What cruel reflections were forced on the ambitious man when he met Éléonore’s steady eye. If he should obey Mo-

deste, all was over forever between the poet and his protectress. If he paid no heed to the girl, it would be an avowal of his serfdom, he would lose the advantages gained by five-and-twenty days of meanness, and fail in the simplest rules of gentlemanly politeness. The greater the folly, the more imperatively the Duchess insisted on it. Modeste's beauty and fortune, set in the opposite scale to Éléonore's influence and established rights, made this hesitancy between the man and his honor as terrible to watch as the peril of a matador in the ring. A man never knows such frightful palpitations as those that seemed to threaten Canalis with an aneurism, anywhere but in front of the gaming-table, where his fortune or his ruin is settled within five minutes.

"Mademoiselle d'Hérouville made me get out of the carriage in such a hurry," said Modeste to Canalis, "that I dropped my handkerchief——"

Canalis gave a highly significant shrug.

"And," she went on, in spite of this impatient gesture, "I had, tied to it, the key of a blotting-case, containing an important fragment of a letter; will you be good enough, Melchior, to ask for it——"

Between an angel and a tigress, equally irate, Canalis, who had turned pale, hesitated no longer; the tigress seemed the less dangerous. He was on the point of committing himself when La Brière appeared in the doorway, seeming to Canalis something like the archangel Michael descended from heaven.

"Here, Ernest, Mademoiselle de la Bastie wants you," said the poet, hastily retreating to his chair by the work-frame.

Ernest, on his part, went at once to Modeste without bowing to anyone else; he saw her alone, received her instructions with visible joy, and ran off with the unconfessed approbation of every woman present.

"What a position for a poet!" said Modeste to Hélène, pointing to the worsted work at which the Duchess was stitching furiously.

"If you speak to her, if you once look at her, all is ended," said Éléonore to Melchior in a low tone, for his *mezzo termine*

had not satisfied her. "And, mind, when I am absent I shall leave other eyes to watch you."

As she spoke, Madame de Chaulieu, a woman of medium height, but rather too fat—as all women are who are still handsome when past fifty—rose, walked towards the group with which Diane de Maufrigneuse was sitting, stepping out with small feet as firm and light as a fawn's. Under her full forms the exquisite refinement was conspicuous with which women of that type are gifted, and which gives them that vigorous nervous system that controls and animates the development of the flesh. It was impossible otherwise to account for her light step, which was amazingly dignified. Only those women whose quarterings of nobility date back to Noah, like Éléonore's, know how to be majestic in spite of being as large as a farmer's wife. A philosopher might, perhaps, have pitied Philoxène, while admiring the happy arrangement of the bodice and the careful details of a morning dress worn with the elegance of a queen and the ease of a girl. Boldly wearing her own abundant and undyed hair, plaited on the top of her head in a coronet like a tower, Éléonore proudly displayed her white neck, her finely shaped bust and shoulders, her dazzling bare arms, ending in hands famous for their beauty. Modeste, like all the Duchess's rivals, saw in her one of those women of whom the others say, "She is past mistress of us all!"

In fact, everyone recognized her as one of those few great ladies who are now become so rare in France. Any attempt to describe how majestic was the carriage of her head, how refined and delicate this or that curve of her neck, what harmony there was in her movements, what dignity in her mien, what nobleness in the perfect agreement of every detail with the whole result in the little arts that are a second nature, and make a woman holy and supreme,—this would be to try to analyze the sublime. We delight in such poetry, as in that of Paganini, without seeking the means, for the cause is a soul making itself visible.

The Duchess bowed, saluting Hélène and her aunt; then she said to Diane in a clear, bright voice without a trace of emotion—

“Is it not time to dress, Duchess?”

And she swept out of the room, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, each giving her an arm. She was speaking in a low voice as she went away with the old maid, who pressed her to her heart, saying, “You are quite charming!” which was as much as to say, “I am wholly yours in return for the service you have just done us.”

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville returned to the drawing-room to play her part as spy, and her first glance told Canalis that the Duchess's last words were no vain threat. The apprentice to diplomacy felt he knew too little of this minor science for so severe a struggle, and his wit served him at any rate so far as to enable him to assume a straightforward, if not a dignified attitude. When Ernest returned with Modeste's handkerchief, he took him by the arm and led him out on the lawn.

“My dear fellow,” said he, “I am, of all men, not the most happy, but the most ridiculous. So I have recourse to you to help me out of the wasps' nest I have got into.—Modeste is a demon; she saw my embarrassment, she mocks at it; she has just spoken to me of two lines of a letter of Madame de Chaulieu's that I was fool enough to trust her with. If she were to show them, I could never make it up again with Éléonore. So, pray, at once ask Modeste for that paper, and tell her from me that I have no views—no pretensions to her hand; I rely on her delicacy, on her honesty as a lady, to behave to me as though we had never met; I entreat her not to speak to me; beseech her to vouchsafe to be implacable, though I dare not hope that her spite will move her to a sort of jealous wrath that would serve my ends to a miracle. . . . Go, I will wait here.”

On re-entering the room, Ernest de la Brière saw there a young officer of Havré's company of the Guards, the Vicomte de Sérizy, who had just arrived from Rosny to announce that MADAME was obliged to be present at the opening of the session. This constitutional solemnity was, as is well known, a very important function. Charles X. pronounced a speech in the presence of his whole family, the Dauphiness and MADAME being present in their seats. The choice of the envoy charged

with expressing the Princess's regrets was a compliment to Diane. She was supposed to be the immediate object of this fascinating youth's adoration; he was the son of a Minister of State, gentleman-in-waiting, and hopeful of high destinies, as being an only son and heir to an immense fortune. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, however, only accepted the Viscount's attentions in order to throw light on the age of Madame de Sérizy, who, according to the chronicle repeated behind fans, had won from her the heart of handsome Lucien de Rubempré.

"You, I hope, will do us the pleasure of remaining at Rosembray," said the severe Duchess to the young man.

While keeping her ears open to evil-speaking, the pious lady shut her eyes to the peccadilloes of her guests, who were carefully paired by the Duke; for no one knows what such excellent women will tolerate on the plea of bringing a lost sheep back to the fold by treating it with indulgence.

"We reckoned without the Constitutional Government," said the Duc d'Hérouville, "and Rosembray loses a great honor, Madame la Duchesse——"

"We shall feel all the more at our ease," observed a tall, lean old man of about seventy-five, dressed in blue cloth, and keeping on his hunting cap by leave of the ladies.

This personage, who was very like the Duc de Bourbon, was no less a man than the Prince de Cadignan, the Master of the Hounds, and one of the last of the French *Grands Seigneurs*.

Just as La Brière was about to slip behind the sofa to beg a minute's speech with Modeste, a man of about eight-and-thirty came in, short, fat, and common-looking.

"My son, the Prince de Loudon," said the Duchesse de Verneuil to Modeste, who could not control an expression of amazement on her youthful features as she saw the man who now bore the name which the General of the Vendée Cavalry had made so famous by his daring and by his execution.

The present Duc de Verneuil was the third son taken by his father into exile, and the only survivor of four children.

"Gaspard," said the Duchess, calling her son to her. The Prince obeyed his mother, who went on as she introduced Modeste—

"Mademoiselle de la Bastie, my dear."

The heir presumptive, whose marriage to Desplein's only daughter was a settled thing, bowed to the girl without seeming struck by her beauty, as his father had been. Modeste thus had an opportunity of comparing the young men of to-day with the old men of the past; for the old Prince de Cadignan had already made her two or three very pretty speeches, proving that he was not less devoted to women than to Royalty. The Duc de Rhétoré, Madame de Chaulieu's eldest son, noted for the style which combines impertinence with easy freedom, had, like the Prince de Loudon, greeted Modeste almost cavalierly.

The reason of this contrast between the sons of the fathers may, perhaps, lie in the fact that the heirs no longer feel themselves to be objects of importance, as their ancestors were, and excuse themselves from the duties of power, since they no longer have anything but its shadow. The fathers still have the fine manners inherent in their vanished grandeur, like mountains gilded by the sunshine, when all around them is in darkness.

At last Ernest succeeded in saying two words to Modeste, who rose.

"My little beauty!" said the Duchess, as she pulled a bell, thinking that Modeste was going to change her dress, "you shall be taken to your rooms."

Ernest went with Modeste to the foot of the great staircase to make the unhappy Melchior's request, and he tried to touch her by describing the poet's miseries.

"He loves her, you see! He is a captive who thought he could break his chain."

"Love! In a man who calculates everything so closely?" retorted Modeste.

"Mademoiselle, you are at the beginning of your life; you do not know its narrow places. Every sort of inconsistency must be forgiven to a man who places himself under the dominion of a woman older than himself, for he is not responsible. Consider how many sacrifices Canalis has offered to that divinity! how he has sown too much seed to scorn the harvest; the Duchess represents to him ten years of devotion

and of happiness. You had made the poet forget everything, for, unhappily, he has more vanity than pride; he knew not what he was losing till he saw Madame de Chaulieu again. If you knew Canalis, you would help him. He is a mere child, and is spoiling his life for ever.—You say he calculates everything, but he calculates very badly, like all poets indeed—creatures of impulse, full of childishness, dazzled, like children, by all that shines, and running after it! He has been fond of horses, of pictures; he has yearned for glory; he sells his pictures to get armor and furniture of the style of the Renaissance and of Louis XV.; he now has a grudge against the Government. Admit that his whims are on a grand scale?”

“That will do,” said Modeste. “Come,” she added, as she saw her father, and beckoned to him to ask him to accompany her, “I will give you that scrap of paper; and you can take it to the great man, and assure him of my entire consent to all he wishes, but on one condition. I beg you to give him my best thanks for the pleasure I have enjoyed in seeing him perform for my sole benefit one of the finest pieces of the German theater. I know now that Goethe’s *chef-d’œuvre* is neither *Faust* nor *Egmont*”—and, as Ernest looked at the sprightly girl with a puzzled expression—“it is *Torquato Tasso*,” she added. “Desire Monsieur Canalis to read it once more,” she went on, smiling. “I particularly desire that you will repeat this to your friend word for word, for it is not an epigram; it is the justification of his conduct—with this difference, that I hope he will become quite sane, thanks to his Éléonore’s folly.”

The Duchess’s head waiting-maid led Modeste and her father to their rooms, where Françoise Cochet had already arranged everything. Their choice elegance surprised the Colonel, and Françoise told him that there were thirty guest-chambers in the same style in the Château.

“That is my idea of a country-house,” said Modeste.

“The Comte de la Bastie will have such another built for you,” replied the Colonel.

“Here, Monsieur,” said Modeste, handing the scrap of paper to Ernest, “go and reassure our friend.”

The words "our friend" struck the young man. He looked at Modeste to see if there were seriously some community of sentiment such as she seemed to acknowledge; and the girl, understanding the implied question, added—

"Well, go; your friend is waiting."

La Brière colored violently, and went, in a state of doubt, anxiety, and disturbance more terrible than despair. The approach to happiness is to true lovers very like what the poetry of Catholicism has called the Straits of Paradise, to express a dark, difficult, and narrow way, echoing with the last cries of supreme anguish.

An hour later the distinguished party had all met again in the drawing-room, some playing at whist, others chatting, the women busy with fancy-work, while awaiting the dinner-hour. The Master of the Hounds led Monsieur Mignon to talk of China, of his campaigns, of the great Provençal families of Portenduère, l'Estorade, and Maucombe; and he remonstrated with him on not asking for employment, assuring him that nothing would be easier than to obtain a post in the Guards with his full rank as Colonel.

"A man of your birth and fortune can never class himself with the present Opposition," said the Prince with a smile.

This aristocratic society pleased Modeste; and not only that, during her visit she gained a perfection of manner which, but for this revelation, she would never in her life have acquired. If you show a clock to a natural mechanic, it is always enough to reveal to him what mechanism means; the germs within him are at once developed. In the same way, Modeste intuitively assimilated everything that gave distinction to the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu. To her each detail was a lesson, where a commonplace woman would have fallen into absurdity by imitating mere manners. A girl of good birth, well informed, with the instincts of Modeste, fell naturally into the right key, and discerned the differences which divide the aristocratic from the middle class, and provincial life from that of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; she caught the almost imperceptible shades; in short, she recognized the grace of a really fine lady, and did not despair of acquiring it.

In the midst of this Olympus she saw that her father and La Brière were infinitely superior to Canalis. The great poet, abdicating his real and indisputable power, that of the intellect, was nothing but a Master of Appeals, eager to become a Minister, anxious for the collar of the Legion of Honor, and obliged to subserve every constellation. Ernest de la Brière, devoid of ambition, was simply himself; while Melchior, eating humble pie, to use a vulgar phrase, paid court to the Prince de Loudon, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, as though he had no liberty of speech like Colonel Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, proud of his services and of the Emperor Napoleon's esteem. Modeste saw the continued pre-occupation of a wit seeking a point to raise a laugh, a brilliant remark to surprise, or a compliment to flatter the high and mighty personages, on whose level he aimed at keeping himself. In short, here the peacock shed his plumes.

In the course of the evening Modeste went to sit with the Master of the Horse in a recess of the drawing-room; she took him there to put an end to a struggle she could no longer encourage without lowering herself in her own eyes.

"Monsieur le Duc," she began, "if you knew me well, you would know how deeply I am touched by your attentions. It is precisely the high esteem I have for your character, the friendship inspired by such a nature as yours, which makes me anxious not to inflict the smallest wound on your self-respect. Before you came to le Havre I loved sincerely, deeply, and for ever a man who is worthy to be loved, and from whom my affection is still a secret; but I may tell you, and in this I am more sincere than most girls, that if I had not been bound by this voluntary engagement, you would have been my choice, so many and so great are the good qualities I have found in you. A few words dropped by your sister and aunt compel me to say this. If you think it necessary, by to-morrow, before the hunt, my mother shall recall me home under the excuse of serious indisposition. I will not be present without your consent at an entertainment arranged by your kind care, where, if my secret should escape me, I might aggrieve you by an insult to your legitimate pretensions.

“ ‘Why did I come?’ you may ask. I might have declined. Be so generous as not to make a crime of an inevitable curiosity. This is not the most delicate part of what I have to communicate. You have firmer friends than you know of in my father and me; and as my fortune was the prime motor in your mind when you came to seek me, without wishing to treat it as a solace to the grief your gallantry requires of you, I may tell you that my father is giving his mind to the matter of the Hérrouville lands. His friend Dumay thinks the scheme feasible, and has been feeling his way to the formation of a company. Gobenheim, Dumay, and my father are each ready with fifteen hundred thousand francs, and undertake to collect the remainder by the confidence they will inspire in the minds of capitalists by taking substantial interest in the business.

“ Though I may not have the honor of being the Duchess d’Hérrouville, I am almost certain of putting you in the position to choose her one day with perfect freedom in the exalted sphere to which she belongs.—Oh, let me finish,” said she, at a gesture of the Duke’s.

“ It is easy to see from my brother’s agitation,” said Mademoiselle d’Hérrouville to her niece, “ that you have gained a sister.”

“ Monsieur le Duc, I decided on this on the day of our first ride together, when I heard you lamenting your position. This is what I wanted to tell you; on that day my fate was sealed. If you have not won a wife, you have, at any rate, found friends at Ingouville, if, indeed, you will accept us as friends.”

This little speech which Modeste had prepared was uttered with such soul-felt charm that tears rose to the Duke’s eyes. He seized Modeste’s hand and kissed it.

“ Remain here for the hunt,” said he. “ My small merit has accustomed me to such refusals. But while I accept your friendship and the Colonel’s, allow me to assure myself, by inquiring of the most competent experts, that the reclaiming of the marsh lands of Hérrouville will involve the Company of which you speak in no risks, but may bring in some profits, before I accept the liberality of your friends.

"You are a noble girl, and though it breaks my heart to be no more than your friend, I shall glory in the title, and prove it to you whenever and wherever I find occasion."

"At any rate, Monsieur le Duc, let us keep the secret to ourselves. My choice will not be announced, unless I am greatly mistaken, till my mother is completely cured; for it is my desire that my plighted husband and I should be blessed with her first glances."

"Ladies," said the Prince de Cadignan at the moment when all were going to bed, "I remember that several of you proposed to follow the hunt with us to-morrow; now I think it my duty to inform you, that if you are bent on being Dianas, you must rise with the dawn. The meet is fixed for half-past eight. I have often in the course of my life seen women display greater courage than men, but only for a few minutes, and you will all need a certain modicum of determination to remain on horseback for a whole day excepting during the halt called for luncheon—a mere snack, as beseems sportsmen and sportswomen.—Are you still all resolved to prove yourselves gallant horsewomen?"

"I, Prince, cannot help myself," said Modeste slyly.

"I can answer for myself," said the Duchesse de Chaulieu.

"I know my daughter Diane; she is worthy of her name," replied the Prince. "Well, then, you are all primed for the sport. However, for the sake of Madame and Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who remain at home, I shall do my best to turn the stag to the further end of the pool."

"Do not be uneasy, ladies, the hunters' snack will be served under a splendid marquee," said the Prince de Loudon when the Master of the Hounds had left the room.

Next morning at daybreak everything promised fine weather. The sky, lightly veiled with gray mist, showed through it here and there in patches of pure blue, and it would be entirely cleared before noon by a northwest breeze, which was already sweeping up some little fleecy clouds. As they left the Château, the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Loudon, and the Duc de Rhétoré, who, having no ladies under their care, started first for the meet, saw the chimneys of the house piercing through the veil-mist in white masses against

the russet foliage, which the trees in Normandy never lose till quite the end of a fine autumn.

"The ladies are in luck," said the Prince to the Duc de Rhétoré.

"Oh, in spite of their bravado last night, I fancy they will leave us to hunt without them," replied the Duc de Verneuil.

"Yes, if they had not each a gentleman-in-waiting," retorted the Duke.

At this moment these determined sportsmen—for the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré are of the race of Nimrod, and supposed to be the finest shots of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—heard the noise of an altercation, and rode forward at a gallop to the clearing appointed for the meet, at one of the openings into the Forest of Rosembray, and remarkable for a mossy knoll. This was the subject of the quarrel. The Prince de Loudon, bitten by Anglomania, had placed at the Duc de Verneuil's orders the whole of his stable and kennel, in the English style throughout. On one side of the clearing stood a young Englishman, short, fair, insolent-looking, and cool, speaking French after a fashion, and dressed with the neatness that characterises Englishmen even of the lowest class. John Barry had a tunic-coat of scarlet cloth belted round the waist, silver buttons with the arms of Verneuil, white doeskin breeches, top-boots, a striped waistcoat, and a black velvet collar and cap. In his right hand he held a hunting-crop, and in his left, hanging by a silk cord, was a brass horn. The chief huntsman had with him two large thoroughbred hounds, pure fox-hounds with white coats spotted with tan, high on their legs, with keen noses, small heads, and short ears, high up. This man, one of the most famous huntsmen of the country whence the Prince had sent for him at great expense, ruled over fifteen hunters and sixty English-bred dogs, which cost the Duc de Verneuil enormous sums; though he cared little for sport, he indulged his son in this truly royal taste. The subordinates, men and horses, stood some little way off, and kept perfect silence.

Now on arriving on the ground, John found there three huntsmen with three packs of the King's hounds that had arrived before him in carts; the Prince de Cadignan's three

best men, whose figures, both in character and costume, were a perfect contrast with the representative of insolent Albion. These, the Prince's favorites, all wearing three-cornered cocked hats, very low and flat, beneath which grinned tanned, wrinkled, weather-beaten faces, lighted up as it were by their twinkling eyes, were curiously dry, lean, and sinewy men, burnt up with the passion for sport. Each was provided with a large bugle hung about with green worsted cords that left nothing visible but the bell of the trumpet; they kept their dogs in order by the eye and voice. The noble brutes, all splashed with liver-color and black, each with his individual expression, as distinct as Napoleon's soldiers, formed a *posse* of subjects more faithful than those whom the King was at that moment addressing—their eyes lighting up at the slightest sound with a spark that glittered like a diamond—this one from Poitou, short in the loins, broad-shouldered, low on the ground, long-eared, that one an English dog, white, slim in the belly, with short ears, and made for coursing: all the young hounds eager to give tongue, while their elders, seamed with scars, lay quiet, at full length, their heads resting on their fore-paws, and listening on the ground like wild men of the woods.

On seeing the English contingent, the dogs and the King's men looked at each other, asking without saying a word—

“Are we not to hunt by ourselves? Is not this a slur on His Majesty's Royal Hunt?”

After beginning with some banter, the squabble had grown warm between Monsieur Jacquin la Roulie, the old Chief Huntsman of the French force, and John Barry the young Briton.

While still at some distance the princes guessed what had given rise to the quarrel, and the Master of the Hounds, putting spurs to his horse, ended the matter by asking in a commanding tone—

“Who beat the wood?”

“I, Monseigneur,” said the Englishman.

“Very good,” said the Prince de Cadignan, listening to John Barry's report.

Men and dogs, all alike, were respectful in the presence of

the Master of the Hounds, as though all alike recognized his supreme authority. The Prince planned the order of the day; for a hunt is like a battle, and Charles X.'s Master of the Hounds was a Napoleon of the forest. Thanks to the admirable discipline carried out by his orders in stable and kennel, he could give his whole mind to strategy and the science of the chase. He assigned a place in the proceedings of the day to the Prince de Loudon's hounds and men, reserving them, like a cavalry corps, to turn the stag back on the pool, in the event of the King's packs succeeding, as he hoped, in forcing the game into the Royal demesne lying in the distance in front of the Château. He gratified the self-respect of his own old retainers by giving them the hardest work, and that of the Englishman, whom he employed in his own special line, by giving him an opportunity of displaying the strength of limb of his dogs and horses. Thus the two methods would work against each other, and do wonders to excite reciprocal emulation.

"Are we to wait any longer, Monseigneur?" asked La Roulie respectfully.

"I understand you, old friend," replied the Prince. "It is late, but——"

"Here come the ladies, for Jupiter scents the fetish odors," said the second huntsman, observing the nose of his favorite hound.

"Fetish?" repeated the Prince de Loudon with a smile.

"He probably means fetid," said the Duc de Rhétoré.

"That is it, no doubt, for everything that does not smell of the kennel is poisonous, according to Monsieur Laravine," replied the Prince.

In point of fact, the three gentlemen could see in the distance a party of sixteen riders, and fluttering at their head the green veils of four ladies. Modeste, with her father, the Duc d'Hérouville, and little La Brière, was in front, with the Duchess de Maufrigneuse attended by the Vicomte de Sérizy. Then came the Duchesse de Chaulieu with Canalis at her side, she smiling at him with no sign of rancor. On reaching the clearing, where the huntsmen, dressed in red, holding their hunting horns, and surrounded by dogs and beaters, formed a

group worthy of the brush of Van der Meulen, the Duchesse de Chaulieu, an admirable figure on horseback, though somewhat too stout, drew up close to Modeste, feeling it beneath her dignity to sulk with the young person to whom, the day before, she had not spoken a word.

Just at the moment when the Master of the Hounds had ended his compliments on such fabulous punctuality, Éléonore condescended to remark the splendid whip handle that sparkled in Modeste's little hand, and graciously begged to examine it.

"It is the finest thing in its way that I have ever seen," said she, showing the gem to Diane de Maufrigneuse; "but, indeed, it is in harmony with the owner's whole person," she added, as she returned it to Modeste.

"You will confess, Madame," replied Mademoiselle de la Bastie, with a mischievous but tender glance at La Brière, in which he could read an avowal, "that it is a very strange gift as coming from a future husband——"

"Indeed," exclaimed Madame de Maufrigneuse, "I should regard it as a recognition of my rights, remembering Louis XIV."

There were tears in La Brière's eyes; he dropped his bridle, and was ready to fall; but another look from Modeste recalled him to himself, by warning him not to betray his happiness.

The cavalcade set out.

The Duc d'Hérouville said in a low voice to La Brière: "I hope, Monsieur, that you will make your wife happy, and if I can in any way serve you, command me; for I should be delighted to contribute to the happiness of two such charming people."

This great day, when such important interests of hearts and fortunes were definitely settled, to the Master of the Hounds offered no other problem but that as to whether the stag would cross the pool, and be killed on the grass slope within sight of the Château; for huntsmen of such experience are like chess players, who can foresee a checkmate many moves ahead. The fortunate old gentleman succeeded to the height of his wishes; the run was splendid, and the ladies relieved him of their presence on the next day but one, which proved to be rainy.

The Duc de Verneuil's guests remained three days at Rosembray. On the last morning the *Gazette de France* contained the announcement that M. le Baron de Canalis was appointed to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor and the post of Minister at Carlsruhe.

When, early in the month of December, the Comtesse de la Bastie was operated on by Desplein, and could at last see Ernest de la Brière, she pressed Modeste's hand, and said in her ear—

“I should have chosen him.”

Towards the end of February all the documents relating to the acquisition of the estates were signed by the worthy and excellent Latournelle, Monsieur Mignon's attorney in Provence. At this time the family of la Bastie obtained from His Majesty the distinguished honor of his signature to the marriage contract, and the transmission of the title and the arms of la Bastie to Ernest de la Brière, who was authorized to call himself the Vicomte de la Bastie-la Brière. The estate of la Bastie, reconstituted to yield more than a hundred thousand francs a year, was entailed by letters patent registered by the Court in the month of April.

La Brière's witnesses were Canalis and the Minister whose private secretary he had been for five years. Those who signed for the bride were the Duc d'Hérrouville and Desplein, for whom the Mignons cherished enduring gratitude, after giving him magnificent proofs of it.

By and by, perhaps, in this long record of our manners, we may meet again with Monsieur and Madame de la Brière-la Bastie, and connoisseurs will then perceive how easy and sweet a tie is marriage when the wife is well informed and clever; for Modeste, who kept her promise of avoiding all the absurdities of pedantry, is still the pride and delight of her husband, of her family, and of her circle of friends.

PARIS, *March-July 1844.*



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